



**Date:** September 6, 2016

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**Through:** Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Terry Bellamy, Transportation Director

**Subject:** Presentation on Bull City Connector Transit Service

### **Executive Summary**

In August 2010, the City of Durham entered into a partnership with Duke University to fund the operation of a new bus service connecting Duke Medical Center, East Campus, Durham Station, downtown and the Golden Belt District east of downtown with a fare-free bus route branded as the Bull City Connector. In response to new development downtown and near Ninth Street, a desire to extend the service farther west beyond the Duke Medical Center, and falling ridership on the route, the City and Duke University agreed to change the routing in August 2015. With one year's experience with the changed service, and concerns raised by the Human Relations Commission to the City Council about the impact of the change, the Department of Transportation has requested GoTriangle to present updated information about the performance of the Bull City Connector, related bus routes in the corridor, and the impact on transit customers.

### **Recommendation**

The Department of Transportation recommends that the City Council receive a presentation from GoTriangle regarding the historical performance of the Bull City Connector and related transit services in the corridor.

### **Background**

Since October 2010, the City has contracted with GoTriangle to provide planning, marketing, and management oversight for the GoDurham transit system. The City maintains authority over all policy, service, pricing, and budget decisions. Just prior to this relationship, the City entered into a partnership with Duke University to fund the Bull City Connector. The service started as a fare-free, specially branded service that was scheduled to run every 15 minutes during the day and every 20 minutes at night and on Saturdays. The service was intended to create a new excitement for the transit system in the City.

Due to growing activity downtown and to construction projects, especially the Main Street bridge replacement over Campus Drive, the frequency of service had to be scaled back to every 20 minutes during the day and every 25 minutes at night and on Saturdays in June of 2013. In 2015, in response to new apartment, hotel, and office

development downtown and near Ninth Street, a desire to extend the service farther west beyond the Duke Medical Center, and falling ridership on the existing route, the City and Duke University agreed to change the routing and frequency. As of August 2015, the new routing stayed on Main Street through downtown, rather than diverting to Durham Station, stayed on Main Street between Ninth Street and Anderson Street, rather than using Erwin Road, and extended to Research Drive on Duke's West Campus. The service frequency was improved to run every 17 minutes all day long on weekdays and Saturdays.

These changes had expected short-term impacts that reduced ridership due to shifting service away from Durham Station and the Duke South Clinics stops. Many transit customers shifted to other GoDurham routes serving the same, or similar, stops. Some customers had to walk between Durham Station and the Bull City Connector in order to get transit access to the intersection of Main Street and Broad Street. Some new customers began using the service to connect areas of the VA Medical Center and Duke's West Campus that now had stops along the route.

The presentation will bring up-to-date data on transit usage in the corridor and on-time performance of the services. The presentation will also provide insight about the answers to the following questions: Why has there been a reduction in ridership on the Bull City Connector? What are the peak times that the service is used on weekdays and Saturdays? How does the service interact with other routes in the corridor? What would the impact be of returning the service to Durham Station?

**Issues/Analysis**

N/A

**Alternatives**

N/A

**Financial Impact**

N/A

**SDBE Summary**

N/A