

Bus Service Faces An Expensive, Less Certain Future In Charlotte

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"The bus is very important to me right now. I'm trying to find a job," she said. "It's cheaper than a cab. A lot of people can't afford cabs and taxis."

The increase in fares is one step city officials are taking to avert a \$2.9 million shortfall projected for Charlotte Transit's budget.

The increase will hurt most riders, many of them inner city residents, contends city councilman Hoyle Martin.

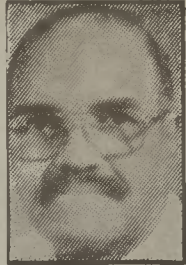
"Most of those who ride make less than \$14,000 a year. Most are riding simply because they don't have any other means. It means that instead of spending \$1.60 a day, they will spend \$2," he said. "That's kind of rough. That's a lot of money when you're making \$14,000."

Many riders may not have to pay the 20 cent increase per ride. "Most of the frequent riders use weekly and monthly passes," according to David Hines, Charlotte Transit general manager.

The weekly passes are \$7 and monthly passes are \$29. For express rides, passes are \$35.

Passes would probably increase at a corresponding percentage "about 25 percent," said Hines. The weekly pass would be between \$8.75 to \$9, he said.

The fare hike alone will not generate the kind of revenue needed to prevent a deficit.



Martin

City Council also approved action to explore with the county a parking tax and to get legislative approval for an increase of \$5 on a motor vehicle tax and a 1 percent tax on rental car gross receipts. Also the council is considering a 1.5 cent increase in property taxes.

But at least one council member says she will not support a tax hike.

"I don't plan to support an increase in property taxes or a reduction in bus service," said Ella Scarborough.

Hines doubts that all of the revenue generating measures will be in place by July 1.

"If you assume that we may not get approval from the state, we will hear more about this," he said.

With 70 percent of riders having no other means of transportation, a reduction in services would hurt as much as a rate hike.

In its action this week, council in essence, put a priority on maintaining bus

service at its present level.

If service is cut, many of the express routes and less productive routes in the eastern and southern parts of the city would be the first to go.

In addition, the frequency of service would be reduced. "Those buses that come every 8 to 10 minutes would come every 15 minutes and those that come every 20 minutes would come every 30 minutes. We wouldn't use service altogether," Hines said.

Some of the most productive routes -- Beatties Ford Road, North Tryon, South Tryon and West Boulevard -- would be less likely to be cut.

"Those are the ones we have lots of service to," Hines said.



Scarborough

Riding the bus is a matter of remaining independent for Ruth Cohen Funderburk. She is retired and lives near Beatties Ford. "I am blind in one eye and I can't drive. My husband works half a day part-time and I like the freedom of going when I get ready," she said. "I enjoy riding the bus."

Using the bus is part of a lifestyle for Carleina Hill and her family. She lives in Ashley Park near Wilkinson Boulevard.

"We depend on the bus to go to work and to do our shop-

ping. If it's not on the bus route we don't go," she said.

"Most days I am waiting an hour and a half altogether for the bus. They are not always on time."

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Black-Owned Publications Fill An Important Need, The Post's Publisher Says

By Janel Clinkscales
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Black publications expose issues of concern to the black community that otherwise would be ignored by major media. Gerald Johnson, publisher of The Charlotte Post, says.

Major media investigates and reports on these issues only because the black press first put them in the limelight.

Johnson spoke on the history and present role of the black press to about 70 public relations workers at the monthly meeting of the Charlotte Public Relations Society Tuesday.

"The most vital role that The Charlotte Post must play is to show the positive aspects of the black community, forcing other media to follow," he said. "Without a good black publication, the portrayal of the black community is generally negative."

Johnson used the recent exclusion of minority vendors by the NBA as an example. Charlotte's major media reported the story only after The Post made it a subject of public interest.

The Post goes back to the 1880s and the paper has been

published continuously since early this century. Blacks have started a few other papers in Charlotte in recent years, Johnson noted, but the capital required has doomed them to failure.

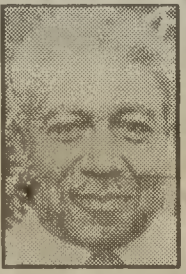
Like other black weekly papers, The Post experienced circulation declines and financial difficulties in the 1960s as many readers abandoned black papers in favor of the black magazines that started after World War II.

Garland Atkins took over The Post in the time of difficulty and hired Bill Johnson, Gerald Johnson's father, as managing editor. Bill Johnson had been Charlotte's first black postman, serving the old downtown Brooklyn community, as well as a long-time sports-writer for The Charlotte Observer.

Bill Johnson bought The Post when he retired from the Postal Service in 1974, gave the paper renewed vigor and attracted an expanding readership.

In recent years, The Post

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Bill Johnson

President Clinton Urged To Reconsider U.S.'s Haitian Refugee Policy

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Justice head Benjamin Chavis, a former member of Clinton's transition team. Leaders plan a campaign to make Haiti a key issue of the Clinton Administration.

"The policy is both inhumane and cruel," said Chavis. "Innocent people, including children, are being returned to certain death, torture and imprisonment. President Clinton not only is preventing them from coming to the U.S., this abhorrent practice doesn't even allow them to find refuge in other countries."

Refugee support groups have called on the Clinton Administration to at least give refugee interviews on Coast Guard ships to determine if they are political refugees, and if so, grant them the right to apply for temporary asylum.

Refugees are fleeing in record numbers since the September 1991 overthrow of the democratically elected President, Jean Bertrand Aristide. The military regime has been cited by virtually every human rights organization for widespread human rights abuses and the killing of over 3,000 people.

During Aristide's government, virtually no boat people left despite enduring poverty. Aristide also reduced human rights violations by 75 percent, and instituted a war against drugs in cooperation with the U.S.

Clinton received cautious praise for his pledge to work to restore Aristide to office.

"Ultimately, the only solution to the refugee crisis is democracy and the return of the elected President Aristide," Chavis said. "The fact that we can move so resolutely in Iraq and are dragging our feet in Haiti hints at a racially biased foreign policy. Hopefully, Clinton will change this."

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