

WNCSource CEO Report

December 12, 2024

Changes to Apple Country Public Transit for Fiscal Year 2024-25

The Henderson County Board of Commissioners voted on December 2 to make a couple of changes to Apple Country Transit operations. Starting December 3, 2024. The transit system will be fare-free through June 30, 2025. The county had talked about this for years. We have generally been supportive because counting the fares has been an administrative burden with small returns for the county or us. We may have to develop more stringent rules for passengers to keep people from riding to stay out of the weather, rather than trying to reach a destination.

We will also be adding an hour to the evening schedule. Currently, service ends AT 6:30 PM. As soon as WNCSource can hire drivers and rearrange schedules, the routes, and paratransit will operate until 7:30 PM. Both of these changes will help members of our community who rely on our public transit service to get to work, shopping, education, and other services. A memo and draft contract from the commissioners' agenda is attached to this report.

Long Range Plans for Apple Country Transit

In September 2022 the Henderson County Board of Commissioners voted to have international public transit consultants AECOM complete a feasibility study for Apple Country Transit. The plans and changes in the study extend well into the 2030s. Some of the changes recommended in the study are:

- All routes would operate until 7:30 PM Monday – Friday
- Route 1 would operate every half hour
- By year 7 Route 2 might operate every half hour
- Route 3 would be modified to provide express service to the Asheville Airport
- A downtown Hendersonville circulator route would be added

The commissioners voted on December 2nd to accept the study. This does not obligate Henderson County to make the changes. A copy of the ACPT Feasibility Study is attached this report.

WNCSource has operated Apple Country Transit since its inception in the early 2000s. The contract has to be put out for bid at least every six years. WNCSource is in the third year of the transit contract.

Housing and Home Improvement Through HCCBG Providers

The state of North Carolina is allowing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that was approved in 2021 to be used to assist older adults with housing improvements, repairs and financial assistance for housing. The state is wanting this assistance to be provided through Home and Community Care Block Grant provider agencies like WNCSource. WNCSource would only be doing this in Transylvania County. The Council on Aging would provide assistance in Henderson County. Polk and Rutherford County governments will provide the services in those counties.

WNCSource will have \$40,000 to spend. We will be taking referrals from the Department of Social Services, our own housing department, Sharing House etc. The funds will have to be expended by June 30, 2025. A memo from the NC Department of Human Services describing this service is attached.