



**Necessary Council Action:**

Accept or reject the Committee's recommendation.

**ITEM 3: Status Report on Ruby Avenue Railroad Improvements/Closure:**

Chairman Kirlin recognized Mr. Bost for staff's presentation. Mr. Bost stated that staff is in the process of following up with Norfolk Southern on their willingness to fund the necessary street improvements for a full closure (along with continuing dialogue with the NCDOT for additional funds). Staff is also waiting on confirmation from Chemtura of their final plans before further evaluating the closure of the Ruby Avenue railroad crossing.

**Recommendation:**

The Committee accepted the information as presented.

**Necessary Council Action:**

No action is required at this time.

**ITEM 4: Update on Multi-Modal Facility & CMAQ Funding**

Chairman Kirlin recognized Ms. Michelle Nance, Director of Planning and Development Services, for staff's presentation. Ms. Nance stated that the City is currently working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to implement a "green" multi-modal transportation facility. The current State Transportation Implementation Plan (STIP) allocates \$800,000 for the completion of an environmental/NEPA documentation and preliminary design work. A draft Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for hiring an environmental consulting firm has been sent to the FTA and NCDOT for review and approval. Once approved by both agencies, the RFQ can be released. In October, 2011, the NCDOT released an additional call for projects for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding for fiscal years 2016 and 2017. With an interest in expediting the multi-modal project through creative funding, discussions began on ways to utilize CMAQ funding to create a green facility, including the purchase of electric vehicles and charging stations for a ride-share program. Later phases of CMAQ funds could be used to incorporate green elements into the multi-modal facility. The City has over \$9 million in CMAQ funds available between FY 2013 through FY 2017.

**Recommendation:**

The Committee accepted the information as presented.

**Necessary Council Action:**

No action is required at this time.

**ITEM 5: Public Transit Alternatives**

Chairman Kirlin recognized Mr. Jim Palenick, City Manager, for staff's presentation. Mr. Palenick stated that for many years, the City has operated a public transit system consisting of a hub and spoke, fixed-route bus transit system with nine fixed routes, using six active buses on weekdays and Saturdays. This system is supplemented by a demand-response paratransit van program, using three handicap-accessible vans available to disabled passengers only. The City also contributes to the Charlotte Area Transit System's 85X Gastonia express bus which takes commuters to and from Uptown Charlotte each weekday. Even with Federal and State tax revenues covering 50% of all operational and maintenance costs and 80% of capital costs, and including revenues from fares at about 9% of the total costs, the City uses General Funds to make up a shortfall of \$592,697.

Therefore, a new, more effective concept is recommended for consideration. In the concept, the City would fully divest itself of fixed-route buses and paratransit vans, thus eliminating the need for Federal and State subsidies. The City would continue to contribute to the Charlotte Area Transit System's 85X express bus which serves commuters from Gastonia to Charlotte and return. The buses and vans would be replaced with demand-response, point-to-point electric taxis and electric paratransit vans owned by the City. Subsidized taxi vouchers would be available for eligible and transit-dependent citizens. The program would be called, "**GREEN-T**", **G**astonia's **R**e-engineered, **E**nvironmentally-responsible, **E**nergy-efficient, **N**ext-generation, **T**ransit-alternative. Ridership studies have already been completed on the paratransit vans. Staff proposed that bus ridership studies be performed over a two-week period sometime in the next 30 to 60 days to gather data which will be essential to building the program.

**Recommendation:**

The Committee voted unanimously (2-0) to recommend to full Council that staff proceed with further research of the alternative transit option as presented.

**Necessary Council Action:**

Accept or reject the Committee's recommendation.

**ITEM 5: Other Business**

**I-85/321 Interchange:** Mr. Ash Smith, City Attorney, requested an update on a meeting request received by the City from NCDOT to discuss the Greenway going under the I-85/321 interchange. The NCDOT is concerned about the minimum 21 feet under the interchange in the event rail service is restored and would like the minimum reduced. Also, the proposed designs of the interchange will be discussed at the proposed meeting. Concerns regarding the design of the interchange were expressed by staff and the Committee.

**Gaston Mall Connector Road:** Councilman Howren asked when a traffic study would be done regarding the Gaston Mall Connector Road in terms of how much traffic has eased on Cox Road. Mr. Flip Bombardier, Assistant City Manager, Public Infrastructure, stated that it would be a good idea to have a traffic study performed in conjunction with NCDOT in the next six to nine months. When the studies are completed, the information will be made available to the Committee.

Having no other business Chairman Kirilin adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.