

**IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET SESSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2005**

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met for a Budget Review Session on Tuesday, May 31, 2005, at 5:30 p.m., in the Iredell County Government Center (South Wing Conference Room), 200 South Center Street, Statesville, NC.

Present were:

Vice Chairman Godfrey Williams
Steve D. Johnson
Marvin Norman
Ken Robertson

Absent: Chairman Sara Haire Tice (due to illness)

Staff present: County Manager Joel Mashburn, Finance Director Susan Blumenstein, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

Others present: Kathryn Wellin with the *Charlotte Observer* and Luann Laubsher with the *Lake Norman Times*.

CALL TO ORDER by Vice Chairman Williams.

37 Transportation: Transportation Director Ben Garrison said four lift equipped vehicles had been requested in the 05-06 budget along with one 25-passenger light weight vehicle. He said the light-weight vehicle, similar to a church van, would be used on the transportation loop.

Garrison said a \$76,000 Jobs Access Reverse Commute grant had been approved for his agency. He said the funding would be directed toward individuals needing transportation to-and-from work, and it would enable the services to operate at earlier and later hours.

Mr. Garrison said annually, 100,000 individuals used the services. He said over 25,000 trips occurred for the general public population.

Garrison said LifeSpan, Inc., an agency for children and adults with developmental disabilities, had advised that as of June 3, 2005, it would not provide transportation for its consumers. He said to complicate the problem, state guidelines did not allow any Rural General funds to be used for human service programs. Garrison said the officials at LifeSpan had told their clients to contact the county for transportation assistance.

County Manager Mashburn said, evidently, mental health had cut out transportation funding.

Finance Director Blumenstein asked if the board members wanted the Jobs Access grant to be included in the budget ordinance. She was told yes.

Commuter Rail: Joining the commissioners for this segment of the meeting were Mooresville Mayor Al Jones, Mooresville Town Manager Jamie Justice, Asst. Mooresville Town Manager Erskine Smith, Lowes Companies Administration Vice President Ames Flynn, Lake Norman Regional Medical Center CEO Paul Smith, and David Carrol, the North Corridor Rail Project Director for the Charlotte Area Transit Authority (CATS).

Mayor Jones said the town and county needed to work together in the rail project, and he asked for financial assistance in the Phase II Engineering (three-year project). Jones said Iredell's FY 06 costs to extend the rail to Mt. Mourne would be

\$127,500 (1/2 of \$255,000). He said that if the rail line extended to Mooresville, at Williams Street, Iredell's portion would be \$304,000 (1/2 of \$608,000).

Mr. Carol provided a handout that contained the following information about the rail project.

Key Issues

- Location for the terminus of the proposed North Corridor Commuter Rail Service to Iredell County – Mooresville (Williams Street) or Mt. Mourne (Fairview Road)

Cost Implications:

Phase 2 Engineering	
Mt. Mourne	\$760,000
Williams Street	\$1.8 million

Additional Funding to Complete Construction:

Mt. Mourne	\$5.8 million
Williams Street	\$14.7 million

North Corridor Program

- Commuter Rail Service from Charlotte to Mooresville along existing NS right-of-way
- Enhanced Bus Service on I-77 Using HOV
- New Charlotte Gateway Station Serving Intercity & Local Transit North Corridor Fast Facts
- Program Focus
 - Upgrade 30 miles of existing Norfolk Southern "O" line to Mooresville
 - Enhance safety at the 70 remaining at-grade crossings
 - Construct 10 stations & the Charlotte Gateway Station terminus
 - Construct train maintenance facility north of Mt. Mourne
- Service
 - Frequency: every 20-30 minutes during rush hour
 - Travel time: 40 minutes from Mt. Mourne; 45 minutes from Mooresville
 - 2002 Ridership Estimate: 5,000 – 6,000 initial; 9,000 in 2025
- Technology
 - FRA Tier 1 compliant trains operating at up to 79 mph in mixed (freight) traffic

North Corridor Program Status

- Station Locations – 12 sites approved by MTC for further analysis
 - Including Mt. Mourne, downtown Mooresville & Williams Street
- At-grade crossings – enhancements under design
- Draft EIS
 - Analysis of environmental, air quality, historic impacts underway
 - Work to date assumes service to Williams Street
 - Planned for submission to the FTA by end of 2005
- Discussions with Norfolk Southern Regarding Use of North Corridor
- Architectural Design for Charlotte Gateway Station

Iredell County Impact

- Train replaces 83X service from Mooresville
- Supports transit-oriented development at Mt. Mourne and in Mooresville
- Provides "Reverse Commute" to Lowe's & Iredell County Employers from Mecklenburg County
- Capital Investment & Employment
 - Train equipment maintenance facility
 - \$5-8 million capital cost
 - Estimated 25-40 employees
 - Stations, crossings & track work -- \$25 million to Williams Street

Iredell County Funding

- Major Investment Study (completed 2002)
 - Mooresville: \$20,000
 - Iredell County: \$10,000
- Draft EIS/Phase I Engineering
 - Federal (80%): \$5.4 million
 - NCDOT (10%): \$670,000
 - Charlotte (7.3%): \$487,000
 - Iredell County & Mooresville (2.7%): \$183,000 (\$91,500 each)

- Final EIS/Phase II Engineering
 - Full Design of track, stations, crossings, facilities and equipment
 - Assumes 25% state funding share but no federal funding
 - Iredell County/Mooresville share depends on rail line terminus

Iredell County Service Options

- Williams Street Terminus
 - Serves downtown Mooresville and NC-115/NC-150 connection to I-77
 - TOD development at Williams Street
 -
- Mt. Mourne Terminus
 - \$30 million less expensive
 - 4.8 fewer miles
 - 2 fewer stations
 - 14 fewer crossings
 - 1 less passing siding
 - Serves Lowe’s area employment center but misses downtown Mooresville

Project Costs

	<u>Mt. Mourne</u>	<u>Williams Street</u>
<u>Mooresville</u>		
Trackage	2.7 of 25.2 miles	7.5 of 30.0 miles
Stations	1 of 8	3 of 10
Crossings	15%	25%
Weighted Average	12% of costs	27% of costs
 Total Project Cost	 \$200 million	
 Iredell County/Mooresville Share		
Phase 2 Engineering	\$765,000	\$1.8 million
Construction	\$5.8 million	\$14.7 million
Total Cost with 50% Federal Funding	\$6.6 million	\$16.5 million

Timing for Decisions

- Final Environmental Impact Statement
 - CATS will include service to Williams Street to preserve option for service to Mt. Mourne and/or Williams Street
- Phase 2 Engineering – October 2005
 - FEIS documentation; engineering/design of stations, trains, facilities, roadbed and at-grade crossings
- Construction – Spring 2007
- Initiate Service: Summer 2009

Summary

Iredell County & Mooresville Funding

- Phase 2 Engineering – October 2005:
 - Williams Street \$1.8 million
 - Mt. Mourne \$760,000
- Construction (Spring 2007) & Implementations of Service (Summer 2009) –
 Additional Required Funding:
 - Mt. Mourne \$5.8 million
 - Williams Street \$14.7 million

Commissioner Norman asked the annual operating costs.

Carol said they had not been calculated. He said a figure might be calculated this summer, and that Mecklenburg would absorb the base costs. Carol said three to five percent would be his estimate.

Commissioner Robertson said he heard it would be \$1 million.

Carol said it wouldn’t be that much.

Commissioner Robertson asked Mayor Jones how Mooresville intended to pay the costs.

Jones said a funding source had been identified; however, he couldn't divulge it.

Commissioner Johnson said that if the terminus turned out to be successful, it would mean "roof tops," and this would mean new schools.

Commissioner Robertson asked an estimate on how many people would ride the train.

Carol said he didn't know.

Robertson said 9,000 people who live in Iredell County also work in Mecklenburg County. He said the estimated number of people who live in Iredell, but work in Mecklenburg County and would ride the train might be about 2,500.

Carol said it was estimated that 500 to a 1,000 Iredell residents might ride the train. He said CATS was building for a 30-to-50-year period, and rail was an alternative means of transportation. Carol said he could actually envision people riding a train from Williams Street to Mt. Mourne.

Robertson said Iredell County had two school systems that needed funding, and his decision would be based upon:

1. highway funding (Would the state or federal government withhold highway funds, if the county did not participate?)
2. tax increase (How much would be needed?)

Commissioner Williams asked the Mooresville officials if a special use tax had been considered.

Mayor Jones said it had been "explored," but it wasn't what the Town intended to use.

Williams asked Jones if the Town's funding source would cover the total cost.

Jones said one-half of the cost. The mayor said he had a problem with special use taxes because individuals from other counties might ride the train for free.

Williams asked Jones when the funding source(s) might be shared.

Jones said the last figures indicated the source might provide \$100,000 a year.

Ames Flynn, with Lowe's Companies, Inc., advocated for the rail project. He said the Mooresville campus had 1,400 employees, and a site across the road had 120 workers. Flynn said that by 2010, it was expected 4,500 employees would be in Mooresville, and this didn't include the Wilkesboro staff. Mr. Flynn said Lowes had invested \$80 million in the county, and this amount would probably double. He said the vendor supplier community was also increasing. Flynn said parking at the campus was a concern, and the company also had concerns about the congested roadways.

Paul Smith with Lake Norman Regional Medical Center, said more growth was expected in the southern end. He said the hospital had 900 to 1,000 full-time, part-time and p.r.n. employees as well as 120 volunteers. Smith said an employee poll had not been taken to determine who might ride the train; however, it was feasible that people would travel from one point in Mooresville to the hospital.

Commissioner Norman asked how many hospital employees were from Mecklenburg County.

Smith said probably one half of them.

Mooresville Manager Jamie Justice said the town would provide the due diligence since there were some unanswered questions. He asked, however, that Iredell's commissioners consider the Phase II funding.

Commissioner Robertson said he understood Mooresville was proposing to engineer the rail all the way to Williams Street.

Jones said yes. He said the town could "backtrack" later, if necessary.

Commissioner Johnson asked the Mooresville officials if they could independently finance the rail project should the county decide it could not participate in the construction.

Commissioner Williams said this was why he had asked about Mooresville's funding plan. He mentioned that Mecklenburg had a half-cent transportation sales tax. Mr. Williams said rail might be a popular idea in one end of the county but not in another.

Commissioner Norman said the legislative representatives needed to be contacted.

Commissioner Williams suggested that a couple of the county commissioners meet with the Mooresville officials and do an independent rail study.

Commissioner Johnson said he would serve.

Commissioner Robertson again voiced concerns about the project's cost. Mr. Robertson said he would be against providing funds unless the federal government withheld highway funding or the nonattainment issue was held against the county.

532 Animal Control: County Manager Mashburn said one new position was recommended for this department.

Commissioner Williams said he noticed that a neighboring county was abolishing the practice of animal disposal by gas and was instead using injectable drugs.

Animal Control Supervisor Robb Tatham said a cost analysis was done a couple of years ago which showed the injectable drug method would take more employee time, plus it was emotionally more difficult for the staff. Tatham said a new law was pending that would require each animal being gassed to be in a separate carrier. (No changes from the county manager's recommendations in this budget.)

536 ECOM: Communications Director David Martin said the Olin tower was being used, but a direct pathway was difficult to find. Martin said a tower on James Farm Road was costing \$200 a month, and a path analysis would be conducted. He said the Cool Springs tower was overloaded. (No changes from the county manager's recommendations in this budget.)

542 EMS: The county manager said three new ambulances were recommended for EMS along with two quick response vehicles. (The QRVs will be located at the Lake Norman and Trinity VFDs.) Mashburn said two of the ambulances would be replacements, and the other one would be for expansion. He said the new vehicles would require 13 new employees.

Commissioner Williams said the First Responder costs had traditionally been in the VFD's budget, but the Fire Tax District Board wanted them listed in the EMS budget. He said some firemen were reluctant to ask EMS for supply replacements. Williams said the fire departments preferred to operate within their own budgets.

Emergency Services Director Tracy Jackson said it would be a challenge to monitor the supplies in the EMS budget, but the staff would accommodate the request should it be a directive from the commissioners.

(No changes from the county manager's recommendations in this budget. There was also no decision regarding which budget should include the costs for the First Responder equipment and supplies.)

544 Fire Marshal: The county manager said one 4 x 4 SUV was recommended to replace a 1989 Suburban. (No changes from the county manager's recommendations.)

546 Emergency Management: Finance Director Blumenstein noted that Homeland Security grants were not included in the budget. She said if any grant funds were received, a budget amendment would be presented to the board. (No changes from the county manager's recommendations.)

911 Emergency Telephone System: (No changes from the county manager's recommendations.)

510 Law Enforcement: Mashburn said five new positions (evidence technician, office deputy, lieutenant, detective sgt., lake patrol deputy) were recommended for the sheriff's department and five new positions were recommended for the jail division (four new jailers and one maintenance technician).

In regards to a new merit system proposed by the sheriff for his employees, Mashburn said he had met with Detective Mike Phillips. The county manager said it would be a mistake, in his opinion, for the sheriff to have his own merit system. He said a merit plan was included in the county budget for all employees.

485 Special Appropriations/Lake Norman Marine Commission: Commissioner Robertson said an area in Lake Norman had a dangerous metal device that was about eight feet below the water's surface. Robertson said he desired to send a letter, on the board's letterhead, to the marine commission asking for assistance in the removal of the object.

Adjournment: Vice Chairman Williams adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m. (Next Meeting: Thursday, June 2, 2005, at 5:30 p.m., for the fourth budget review session.)

Approval: _____

Clerk to the Board