

TOWN COUNCIL



STAFF REPORT Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	August 11, 2015
PROJECT:	Designation of Lowcountry Regional Transit Authority as the Direct Recipient of Public Transportation Funds
PROJECT MANAGER:	Kendra Lelie, AICP, Assistant Director of Growth Management Karen Jarrett, P.E., Transportation Project Manager

REQUEST: Town Staff recommends approval of a Resolution Designating Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority (LRTA) as the entity to receive Federal public transportation funds on behalf of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), known as the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS).

BACKGROUND: As a result of the 2010 census, the Bureau of the Census designated the Town of Hilton Head Island, the Town of Bluffton, and portions of southern Beaufort County to be an 'Urbanized Area' because their combined population (68,998) reached over 50,000. This required the creation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to carry out a transportation planning process on a regional basis. The municipalities of Beaufort, Port Royal, Hardeeville, Bluffton, and Hilton Head Island, and both Jasper and Beaufort Counties have joined the new MPO. These governmental entities have approved a resolution defining MPO boundaries, identifying Policy Board membership, delegating the lead agency to the Lowcountry Council of Governments, and naming the MPO organization as the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study.

In February 2013, the Governor officially created LATS as the newest of eleven MPOs in South Carolina. In order to receive Federal funding for public transit in the LATS area, a Direct Recipient must be identified. Lowcountry Regional Transit Authority (known as Palmetto Breeze) was identified as serving as the Direct Recipient for Federal funds for the MPO LATS area.

SUMMARY: To receive Federal monies for public transportation, each participating local government in the urbanized area (Hilton Head Island, Bluffton and Beaufort County) and the LATS Policy Board must designate a public transportation entity to apply for and receive Federal monies to promote regional transportation for LATS.

Local matches from each of the urbanized area governments will be requested by LRTA in order to provide service to those areas. The local match will also provide the opportunity for the Town to plan for and specify transit needs within the Town of Bluffton ranging from a request for trolleys to bus stop signs and benches/shelters.

On July 21, 2015, the Town of Hilton Head Island passed a resolution authorizing the LRTA as the entity to execute and file applications for Federal assistance and Beaufort County is scheduled to adopt a similar resolution on or about August 24, 2015. The resolution was circulated to staff in each governmental agency from

Lowcountry Council of Governments. Staff has modified it to reflect specific information relevant to Bluffton, particularly that the local match must be requested from and approved by future Town Councils as they determine, but the overall intent remains unchanged.

Staff from the Town of Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County and Bluffton also met several times to discuss how best to distribute the local match funds needed for the Federal Transit Administration grants. After discussions and talks with other transit agencies in South Carolina, population distribution seemed the easiest and most straightforward method to use in determining the distribution of the matching funds. There is no commitment to use this method, but it is simply the method replicated by other transit agencies have utilized.

At the last Policy Committee meeting on June 22, 2015, the Policy Committee voted to approve the resolution required from LATS MPO and to obtain the signature of the Mayor (Chairwoman of the Committee) on the resolution as soon as the local government resolutions have been received. Once the LATS MPO resolution is signed and provided to SCDOT and the Federal Transit Administration, they will begin the task of verifying that LRTA is an acceptable designee which will take several more months, likely extending into FY17.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION

AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF APPLICATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION, AN OPERATING ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, FOR FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED BY 49 U.S.C. CHAPTER 53; TITLE 23, UNITED STATES CODE, OR OTHER FEDERAL STATUTES ADMINISTERED BY THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION.

WHEREAS, in March 2012, the Bureau of the Census defined a new Urbanized Area, based on the 2010 Census, when the combined population of the Town of Hilton Head Island, the Town of Bluffton, and parts of unincorporated Beaufort County reached over 50,000; and

WHEREAS, 23 CFR Section 450.310(a) requires that a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) be designated for each Urbanized Area with a population of more than 50,000 individuals as determined by the Bureau of the Census; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the MPO is to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, in August 2012, the Town Council of the Town of Bluffton previously adopted a Resolution providing for the approval of geographical boundaries and policy board membership to the Metropolitan Planning Organization, known as the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS); and

WHEREAS, the Federal Transit Administrator has been delegated authority to award Federal financial assistance for a transportation project to MPOs; and

WHEREAS, a direct recipient must be so designated by the LATS Policy Board and each participating local government in the urbanized area to act as the Applicant for financial assistance in public transportation projects; and

WHEREAS, the grant or cooperative agreement for Federal financial assistance will impose certain obligations upon the Applicant, and may require the Applicant to provide the local share of the project cost; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant has or will provide all annual certifications and assurances to the Federal Transit Administration required for the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL FOR THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, THAT:

1. The Executive Director of the Lowcountry Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) is authorized to execute and file an application for Federal assistance on behalf of LRTA/Palmetto Breeze for the LATS; and
2. The Executive Director of LRTA is authorized to execute and file with its applications the annual certifications and assurances and other documents the Federal Transportation Administration requires before awarding a Federal assistance grant or cooperative agreement; and

3. The Executive Director of LRTA is authorized to execute grant and cooperative agreements with the Federal Transit Administration on behalf of the LRTA/Palmetto Breeze for the LATS.
4. Subject to Council Authorization, the Town will work with the other local governments and the state within the urbanized area to provide local matching funds for the urban funds from the Federal Transit Administration but shall limit the Town's share of local matching funds to that portion which is justified by LRTA proposed budgets and other governmental contributions to be approved by Council.

MOVED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2015.

Lisa Sulka, Mayor

ATTEST:

By: _____
Sandra Lunceford, Town Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Terry Finger, Town Attorney