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MEDIA CONTACT: Heather Ilgenfritz, Communications Manager
717.713.1443

Cumberland County Commissioners' Statement on Fixed Route Bus Service for Commuters

Carlisle, PA - Today marks the end of a well-intentioned experiment that failed to live up to expectations. The Carlisle Circulator sought to fill unmet transportation needs in and around the Borough. Ridership never reached projections, falling short of minimum targets needed to qualify for ongoing state funding. No reasonable person would advocate that local stakeholders pick up the tab for a service best known for its empty buses.

The end of the Circulator pilot takes place as the future of fixed route transit in the Capital Area Transit (CAT) service area is in flux. Since 2014, Cumberland County Commissioners have insisted that CAT deliver better service in a more cost effective manner. Since 2015, Cumberland has made provisions of its local match funding – some \$300,000 per year – contingent on improved service, more transparency, lower costs, and progress towards transit authority consolidation as proposed by PennDOT.

Cumberland last paid its local match for the second half of 2016 through December 31, 2016. When asked about its 2017 local match, the Commissioners reiterated the same conditions as before. During discussions with CAT, Cumberland pointed to CAT's engagement of David Kilmer, executive director of South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) to assess its obligations, finances and operations as a potentially positive move towards regionalization. Cumberland officials stated that payment of its local match for the first half of 2017 – and beyond could be forthcoming depending on what the CAT Board does with Kilmer's recommendations.

With 10.5 months' worth of prior year CAT overbillings of local match, by all CAT funding partners, available to fund operations through October, there is no danger of CAT running out of money until then. However, CAT management has threatened cuts in service to Cumberland commuters if the County doesn't pay its match.

Our Board of Commissioners has made it clear that its goal is to ensure uninterrupted service to its commuters through any transition to a consolidated transit provider, like York's rabbitransit. It is up to CAT management to demonstrate to all of its funding partners that it will not stand in the way of transit regionalization, at the same time honoring its legal requirements to provide ongoing bus service to commuters. Like the Circulator, CAT's opportunity to demonstrate that it can deliver value to regional taxpayers has expired. Don't make punishing commuters part of CAT's exit strategy.

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