

# TriCounty Link bus service expands

The Sept. 23 article on road rage in The Post and Courier correctly pointed out that the tremendous growth in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties has contributed to traffic congestion on our major roads and that there are no easy solutions to the problem.

However, the section on page 2A that asked the question, "How about public transit?" referred only to the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA). As executive director of the TriCounty Link, I would like to take this opportunity to provide important information about the other public transportation service in our region.

The TriCounty Link (formerly known as the Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester, Rural Transportation Management Association) has been in operation for 12 years. The original rural transit system served each county with five fixed routes.

However, with little financial support and low ridership, the least productive routes had to be eliminated. It was a difficult decision but one that had to be made to keep the struggling system operational. Thanks to the dedication of our staff and board of directors, we are now able to operate in the "black," and our ridership is growing.

The TriCounty Link currently provides Medicaid and contract services and also operates six bus routes that cover a large part of the rural areas of Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester



counties.

We do this by efficiently using rural funding from the Federal Transit Administration, the state of South Carolina, contracts with adult day-care facilities, advertising revenue and a portion of the half-cent sales tax revenue.

In 2006, we initiated a study and held a number of public meetings to determine how the transportation needs of the rural communities could be met more effectively.

During the public meetings, we heard from a great number of rural residents who are forced to pay exorbitant amounts of money for transportation to medical appointments and just to do their grocery shopping.

Their stories confirmed what we suspected, the transportation needs of our rural residents are great.

With additional thanks to Charleston County Council, the half-cent sales tax revenue is funding a new route up U.S. Highway 17N that enables rural residents to travel from McClellanville and Awendaw to Mount Pleasant, where

they can transfer to CARTA and travel to other locations throughout the urban area. An added benefit is an agreement between the Link and CARTA that only requires customers to pay one fare when transferring between the two systems. An additional route to serve the rural areas of Johns Island will be implemented later this year.

As stated in The Post and Courier article, taming our traffic problems will require many solutions. We must optimize all our transportation options and create a variety of ways for urban and rural residents to get to work, and to medical appointments and shopping throughout the region.

The board of directors, management, and employees of the TriCounty Link are committed to continuing their efforts to serve the needs of our rural customers and to be part of the solution to our region's traffic problems.

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