THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Chris Whitlock, Transit Division Manager;
Jessica Morriss, Assistant Director of Transportation;
Ashley Haire, Director of Transportation

DATE: June 2, 2026

SUBJECT: Response to Questions Regarding Draft Transit Network Changes

SUMMARY STATEMENT: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the requested additional information on the proposed transit network adjustments in the Draft Network Plan and to explain how service modifications would enable the strategic reallocation of transit resources to improve frequency, reliability, and overall system performance.

The Draft Network proposed changes allow transit resources to be strategically reallocated throughout the city, primarily toward providing **15-minute service** in several key locations, including the following:

- **Between Hillcrest and Downtown**
- **Between Downtown and the River Arts District**
- **Between Downtown and Biltmore Village** (along Biltmore Avenue to Mission Hospital and then McDowell)

Additionally, the Draft Network proposes to improve service on **Hendersonville Rd from Biltmore Village to Long Shoals from 45 minutes to 30-minutes**, greatly improving the usability of the system on this key corridor. Throughout the remainder of the system (except where service has been proposed to be removed) service frequency has largely remained unchanged, with most other routes remaining at 30-minute or 60-minute frequency.

It is important to note that these proposed adjustments to the system are not made by making one-to-one swaps or cuts in other areas of the transit system. Removing service from less utilized areas, or using a single bus to serve multiple areas, allows us to pool smaller increments of saved time and resources together. Much like combining fractions of a bus from different routes, these cumulative savings free up the resources required to increase frequency and improve on-time performance along the city's main corridors.

1. **Macon Ave / Grove Park Inn to North Merrimon**
    - **Proposed Change:** Remove Macon Ave / Grove Park Inn (30 daily rider boardings). Still serves Charlotte St. up to Evelyn Pl. the cuts over to Merrimon.
    - **Resource Realignment:** Combine into one route bus stops on Charlotte Ave (currently served by N5), North Merrimon Ave (currently served by N1 and N2) and the Elkwood/Lakeshore area (currently served by N1).
    - **Rationale:**

i. Demand on the North Merrimon corridor is four times higher (130 daily rider boardings). This change eliminates a time-consuming turnaround, improves on-time performance, and shifts resources to where demand is higher.
ii. If the plan is approved, staff will coordinate with Grove Park and request for them to transport riders to/from the transit stop.

2. **Beaverdam Rd to North Merrimon**
   - **Proposed Change:** Remove service on Beaverdam Rd (2 daily rider boardings).
   - **Resource Realignment:** Shift these resources to the North Merrimon Ave and Elkwood Ave/Lakeshore Dr.
   - **Rationale:** This change allows buses to focus on higher-demand corridors that offer riders better access to key destinations and areas of interest.

3. **Westside of Haywood Rd to Eastside of Haywood Rd**
   - **Proposed Change:** Remove service on the western segment of Haywood Rd between Brevard Rd and Patton Ave (34 daily rider boardings).
   - **Resource Realignment:** Focus service on the busier segment of Haywood Rd extending from Downtown Asheville to Brevard Rd.
   - **Rationale:** Demand on Haywood Rd east of Brevard Rd is nearly five times higher (157 daily rider boardings). Shortening the line prevents the bus from stretching into lower-demand areas, keeping service frequent and reliable where the vast majority of riders and destinations are located.

4. **Brevard Rd to Haywood Rd & Pisgah View**
   - **Proposed Change:** Remove service on Brevard Rd between Shelburne Rd and Ridgefield Blvd, and at the outlet mall (40 daily rider boardings).
   - **Resource Realignment:** Reallocate transit service to the higher-demand segment of Haywood Rd east of Brevard Rd (157 daily rider boardings) and maintain 30-minute frequency in Pisgah View.
   - **Rationale:**
     i. This change shifts resources to a corridor with four times the demand, while improving the reliability of transit service on that corridor, and maintains 30-minute service for a transit-dependent community.
     ii. This change will also provide service to Carrier Park via Amboy Road (new).

5. **MAHEC to Hendersonville Rd**
   - **Proposed Change:** Remove the stop on MAHEC campus (11 daily rider boardings).
   - **Resource Realignment:** Keep buses entirely on the Hendersonville Rd main corridor (i.e. not go up the hill to MAHEC).
   - **Rationale:**
     i. Not diverting to MAHEC campus is a key part of how we are able to improve frequency on Hendersonville Rd. to every 30 min. (instead of every 45 min.) and improve on-time performance on a corridor with much higher demand and better overall access to areas of interest.
     ii. The stop at Hendersonville Rd and Irwin St (¼ mile from the campus) would continue to have transit service. If the plan is approved, staff will coordinate with MAHEC for them to transport riders to/from the transit stop.

6. **Kenilworth to Tunnel Rd**
   - **Proposed Change:** Remove service along Kenilworth Rd, Warwick Rd, and Forest Hill Dr (7 daily rider boardings).
   - **Resource Realignment:** Keep buses on Tunnel Rd. and Swannanoa River Rd. and keep 30-minute service to Mall, Walmart, River Ridge, VA, and VRQ.
   - **Rationale:** Shifting these resources to Tunnel Rd ensures transit service is concentrated where the vast majority of riders and destinations are located (393 daily rider boardings on Tunnel Rd between Ingles and S Tunnel Rd), while maximizing overall route efficiency.

7. **Piney Mountain Dr and Social Security Office to Tunnel Rd**
    - **Proposed Change:** Remove service on Piney Mountain Dr and Social Security Office (8 daily rider boardings).
    - **Resource Realignment:** Keep buses on Tunnel Rd. and keep 30-minute service to Mall, Walmart, River Ridge, VA, and VRQ.
    - **Rationale:** Eliminating the diversion up to the Social Security Office ensures better on-time performance and reliability by focusing resources on Tunnel Rd, where demand is higher (393 daily rider boardings between Ingles and S. Tunnel Rd) and overall access to areas of interest is stronger.

NEXT STEPS: Staff requests Council feedback on the proposed network modifications and associated resource allocations. Following Council review and public engagement, staff and the consultants will evaluate comments received and determine whether revisions to the Draft Network Plan are warranted and feasible before presenting a final recommendation for consideration.