



Feb. 2, 2015

Express Bus between Fishers, downtown Indy to be suspended May 1

Costs demanded an increase in fares and reduction in frequency

Despite the efforts of the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA) and the City of Fishers to reduce costs and increase ridership, the Indy Express Bus service between Fishers and downtown Indianapolis will be suspended on May 1.

In a letter to CIRTA, Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness said it was necessary to terminate Fishers' funding for the service. Fishers had been funding the rental and maintenance of the Eastern Star parking lot for riders' parking and subsidizing expenses when ridership dipped below the breakeven point.

"CIRTA did everything it could to keep the service going, but public transit requires public support, and we lost that, said Cassie Stockamp, president of the CIRTA board of directors. "Contrary to what many people believe, fares alone never cover the cost for public transportation. Even in cities like New York – where everyone uses the subway and buses – public support is necessary. We need to change the culture in Central Indiana to embrace that idea."

"The demand for ridership was strong when the cost and frequency was more appealing. At one point, when fares were low at \$2 and we had eight morning and eight afternoon departures, we saw more than triple the riders we do now," said Stockamp.

The service originally began 2007 with funding from a one-time nonrenewable federal demonstration grant. IndyGo then operated the service. CIRTA took it over in 2011 when the grant expired and worked with the Town of Fishers and Miller Transportation to keep it going.

But in order to cut costs, the fare was gradually increased to \$5 each way and the number of departure times reduced repeatedly to the current two in the morning and two in the afternoon. The price increase and reduction in frequency caused a loss in riders.

"Good public transportation is worthwhile, but it's hard to put forth a high-caliber service when you're operating it on a shoestring," said Stockamp. "This is why we need a longer term

solution for Central Indiana's mass transit system and why the Indy Connect plan is so important."

As an alternative for Express Bus riders, CIRTAs rideshare program, Commuter Connect, will help transition as many riders as possible into carpools and vanpools so they can continue to share rides to and from work. The City of Carmel ended Express Bus last fall, and now 15 former riders commute via a Commuter Connect-organized vanpool.

People interested in learning more about vanpools and carpools may contact Heather White at hwhite@cirta.us or 317-327-7433.

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