

A BRIEF JAUNT HISTORY

1975: Following five years of studies supporting the idea of coordinated service for human service agencies, Region Ten obtained funding from the Area Manpower Planning Council for a CETA position of Transportation Coordinator. **J**efferson **A**rea **U**nited **T**ransportation (JAUNT) Board was formed in July with five agency representatives, the VEC's Work Incentive Program committed their van to provide rural transportation, and in September 1975 the first six clients were transported. The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) and Greene County Economic Development Corporation applied for a federal rural transportation demonstration grant (Section 147).

1976: Region Ten supplied a small start-up grant. Seven additional CETA positions were allocated from various agencies. Offices were located at 1111 Rose Hill Drive. The Section 147 grant was turned down, and when it was re-submitted for the entire planning district it was approved (\$275,000). Zone fares were instituted. Economic conditions required lay-offs and salary reductions.

1977: Section 147 service began. The office moved to Westminster Presbyterian Church. The fleet size was six vans.

1978: Fifteen routes started serving Albemarle, Fluvanna, and Nelson Counties. The fleet consisted of eighteen radio-equipped vans, and 25 employees.

1979: A second radio frequency was added to better reach Nelson County. The office moved to 1138 E. High Street, JAUNT's home for the next twelve years. The by-laws were amended to provide for one director from each of the six jurisdictions. Local governments were asked for funding for the first time (Albemarle and Nelson appropriated funds; Greene, Louisa, and Fluvanna did not; JAUNT's objective was to provide transportation for social service-related clientele and expand transportation services for the general public not served by any other source at a price that both can afford. The first lift-equipped van was added to the fleet.

1980: An hourly rate was instituted for agencies. Charlottesville appropriated local funds for Jaunt. The first federal mass transit funding allocation (Section 18) was delayed and caused JAUNT to go into debt. Problems with the audit of Section 147 grant lingered for over a year. The RideShare program started at JAUNT to help businesses and individuals to form carpools and vanpools.

1981: The CETA program tapered off. CPR and First Aid training for drivers was required. The Board developed a Five-Year Strategy.

1982: Medicaid service increased by five-fold. The Blue Ridge Hospital/PVCC shuttle started service. The agency rate doubled in response to the loss of CETA jobs program funding. The demand-response sector service in Nelson County

was tried and failed. JAUNT was recognized as a model rural coordinated system by three university or national associations. Total local match at this time: \$26,280.

1983: The effects of Charlottesville becoming an urban area following the 1980 census caused institutional changes. JAUNT, Inc. was formed to receive urban federal funding; JAUNT, Inc. is owned by the local governments and is given all the assets of Jefferson Area United Transportation. The Metropolitan Transportation Organization was formed to govern urban area transit and highway issues, and federal excise tax exemption is obtained. Cash flow from delayed federal grants required funds to be borrowed to make payroll. JAUNT received its first two computers: one for accounting and operations, the other for the RideShare program. JAUNT engaged in an active relationship with taxis. The first mechanic was hired, and they worked under a tree for the next seven years. The search for a facility was initiated and delayed pending area-wide studies.

1984: The second lift-equipped vehicle was leased to JAUNT by City. JAUNT switched back to rural federal funding. JAUNT provided a Reid's Supermarket shuttle when the downtown location burns down. The first wheelchair vehicle was purchased.

1985: The first annual survey of human service agency satisfaction was conducted. Urban fares were lowered for passengers with disabilities, yielding a 129% increase in ridership. All JAUNT drivers were certified in passenger assistance techniques. New routes from Nelson County, Esmont, and Greene County were created. An outreach program was started in Albemarle and Nelson. Agency staff members were certified to drive.

1986: Fluvanna rejoined JAUNT. A service to take Nelson residents to jobs at Wintergreen employment was established. A new route from Scottsville was launched. A Southwood route was attempted and failed to thrive. A zone fare system in rural Albemarle was instituted. Defensive driving training was required for all operators. The first policy manual for staff and users was created. JAUNT was serving 70 agencies and institutions. The outreach program expanded to Fluvanna County.

1987: Louisa rejoined JAUNT. Both Fluvanna and Louisa became stockholders. Driver safety awards and accident review committee were formed. The Scottsville route was extended into Buckingham. JAUNT entered into an agreement with Charlottesville Transit Service(CTS) to provide ADA paratransit services.

1988: The RideShare and Community Outreach staff positions were combined. The Schuyler route and Blue Ridge Shuttle were discontinued. The

Transportation Safety Institute filmed training movies at JAUNT. JAUNT worked with Greyhound to provide seamless rural connections.

1989: The Board was reduced to eleven members based on an outside review. The first Rodeo was held. A toll-free number implemented. JAUNT obtained its own radio frequency. Fares for certified urban Albemarle riders were lowered from \$2.50 to \$1.50 – ridership increased by 97%. The Esmont route was discontinued due to low ridership.

1990: Computer-aided dispatching was installed. An agency policy manual was developed. JAUNT received the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) Administrator's award for excellence in providing rural public transportation, was recognized in DOT's Best Practices in Specialized and Human Service Transportation Coordination, and Barrier Free Achievers.

1991: A transportation intern focused on Fluvanna County was approved. New RideShare highway signs. VA Municipal League Insurance gave JAUNT a safety performance award.

1992: The Greene County route ended service. A fare collector was added to the buses. Garage space was rented. A new Park and Ride lot in Waynesboro was instigated by RideShare.

1993: JAUNT moved into a new building purchased with federal funding, designed specifically for transit (104 Keystone Place). Pre-employment and post-accident drug and alcohol testing was instituted. A driver won the state paratransit Rodeo and second place in the national competition.

1994: JAUNT was named the National Community Transportation System of the Year by Community Transit Association of America (CTAA). A driver won first place in the National Paratransit Driver Rodeo. Additional land was purchased for parking. Operations staff were divided into reservationists and dispatchers. Fluvanna County started a new employment route. A second part-time mechanic was hired. The JobStar program was created to provide 24 hour a day job transportation to people with disabilities. This program was funded by a grant from the U.S. Departments of Education and Rehabilitative Services and provided 295 passengers with nearly 40,000 trips over the next three years.

1995: A second full-time mechanic was hired. JAUNT began to subcontract with Yellow Cab Transportation begins. Louisa County launched a major service expansion.

1996: The JobStar program ended. A grant-funded service linking Augusta County's CATS transportation program with JAUNT provided three months of service. The fiscal year changed to match local fiscal year dates of July 1

through June 30. The RideShare program moved to the Planning District. The Crozet route started. Donna Shauneseay was hired as Executive Director.

1997: A structure with four Service Supervisor positions was adopted to provide immediate driver interaction. The Board completed their first Strategic Plan. Maintenance information became available electronically.

1998: Technical upgrades included installation of some automated scheduling, E-mail, and a web page. A voluntary uniform program was instituted. Policies were changed to limit service schedule disruptions due to inclement weather. A Welfare-to-Work grant was obtained from the Virginia Department of Social Services for Fluvanna, Albemarle, and Charlottesville. A new service on 29 North (Big Blue) was created. The service to Wintergreen ended at their request. JAUNT began receiving urban federal money again. A new exact fare policy implemented. Intensive passenger education was launched. The total local match increased to \$814,596. The fleet consisted of 60 vehicles, with 81 employees and seven cab drivers.

1999: Night and weekend transportation for people with disabilities started in Charlottesville and Albemarle. Fluvanna intracounty service was launched two days a week, as was wheelchair service for UVA students, faculty, and staff. A new half-acre parking lot was completed. Commuter Information marketing efforts were initiated. JAUNT received VTA's Outstanding Public Transportation System Award for non-urbanized areas. The Federal Transit Administration awarded JAUNT one of only seven grants in Virginia to assist welfare recipients in making the transition from welfare to work. A JAUNT driver won first place in the state paratransit Roadeo and placed third in the national competition in New Orleans.

2000: JAUNT celebrated its 25th Anniversary. Night and weekend service for people with disabilities expanded its hours of operation to match CTS's expanded services. Nearly 35,000 trips were provided under the Job Access transportation grant, and service was provided to Greene County residents as well as those in Charlottesville, Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, and Nelson. The local match was \$858,072 and ridership was 264,996.

2001: After a two-year hiatus, employee transportation seven days a week to Wintergreen returned. Ridership in Louisa grew 26% from existing services. New midday services to Charlottesville began in both Nelson and Fluvanna Counties. The local match was \$933,297 and ridership was 282,972.

2002: Brokered Medicaid services became available, causing a decline in Medicaid riders.

2003: JAUNT implemented computerized dispatching and scheduling, along with automatic vehicle locators and computers in each vehicle to receive and

transmit passenger information. The Crozet Commuter route was initiated and ended due to low ridership. The Big Blue route ended due to low utilization. The local match was \$1,026,462 and ridership was 247,287.

2004: JAUNT undergoes a facility addition, telephone system upgrade and transitions to IVR. On-time performance improved. Local match was \$1,121,281.

2005: All drivers are required to be trained as Paratransit Vehicle Operators. The new facility is completed. The JARC grant ended. After tens years cabs were phased out. JAUNT celebrated its 30th Anniversary and 5 millionth passenger trip.

2006: The urban boundary was expanded, causing loss of rural funding. Buckingham service was initiated.

2007: JAUNT Friends was created as a new nonprofit supporting public transportation. A new logo and marketing plan were developed. Local match was \$1,616,180.

2008: JAUNT rebranding and Transit Development Plan were both completed. JAUNT celebrated its 6 millionth passenger ride.

2009: JAUNT Friends established a mission statement and began issuing passengers fare scholarships in earnest. JAUNT reached 300,000 trips per year.

2010: The Fluvanna Express gained support from the Fluvanna BOS. A new security system and new phone system were installed. Cameras were placed on all of the buses. JAUNT celebrated its 35th anniversary.

2011: JAUNT Friends received its first grant from the Nelson Community Foundation to provide free trips for the Nelson Food Pantry. The Foothills Express service began providing trips to Charlottesville from Culpeper and Madison. JAUNT driver Brian Cropp won first prize at the CTAV Roadeo in the overall Body-on-Chassis division.

2015: Jaunt celebrated 40 years of dedicated service to central Virginia. Brad Sheffield was named CEO.

2016: Jaunt established the "29 Express" commuter route, to eventually become CONNECT and expand to serve Crozet, Buckingham, and Lovingston.

2017: The service area included over 2600 square miles. The fleet consisted of 85 vehicles and the organization employed 118 individuals. The Regional Transit Partnership was formed and included JAUNT in its membership.

2019: Jaunt rebranded the fixed route commuter service as CONNECT. Services connected 29 North/ Hollymead, Buckingham, Crozet, and Lovingston, to Charlottesville

2020: COVID-19 drastically changed the transportation landscape. Jaunt rebranded and assumed operation of Greene County Transit. JAUNT celebrated its 45th anniversary.

2021: Jaunt is investigated by DRPT, and results indicate a pattern of misinformation and inaccurate reporting by JAUNT leadership that resulted in the over-allocation of state and federal resources to JAUNT from FY19 through FY22. As a result of the inaccuracies, JAUNT owed \$968,640 to the state and took a \$429,163 cut to its operating assistance. Grants for additional vehicles were suspended. Ted Rieck was named CEO.