CHRISTIANSBURG QUARTERLY REPORT
OCTOBER 2010 – DECEMBER 2010

Service Overview

When reviewing the quarterly report from last year some points to keep in mind:

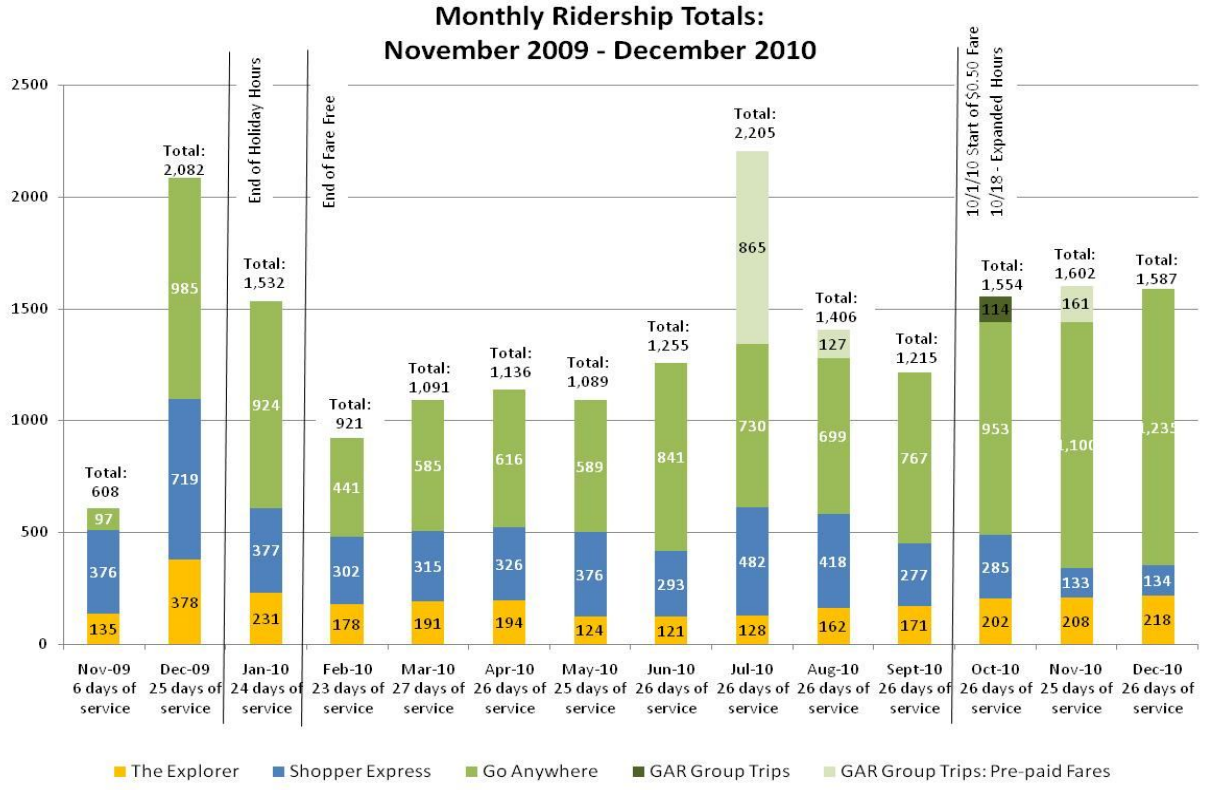
- BT has been operating this service only for 13 full months.
- Fares were $2.00 on the Go Anywhere from February until October 2010 when they were reduced to 50 cents.
- This new service has increased accessibility for citizens of Christiansburg providing greater hours, greater range of travel and greater accessibility to employment, services, and leisure activities compared to the limited Two Town Trolley.
- It was not until the third quarter that group trips were booked.
- Beginning with the next monthly report we will compare the months side by side by to last year.

Monthly Ridership Review: November 2009 through December 2010

Total ridership for the Explorer, Shoppers Express, and Go Anywhere was 4,743 for the fourth quarter of 2010. This compared favorably with the preceding quarter which had 4,826 riders with one additional day of service over the fourth quarter. As in the past quarter, the Go Anywhere accounted for the majority of riders with 3,563 riders or 75.1 percent.

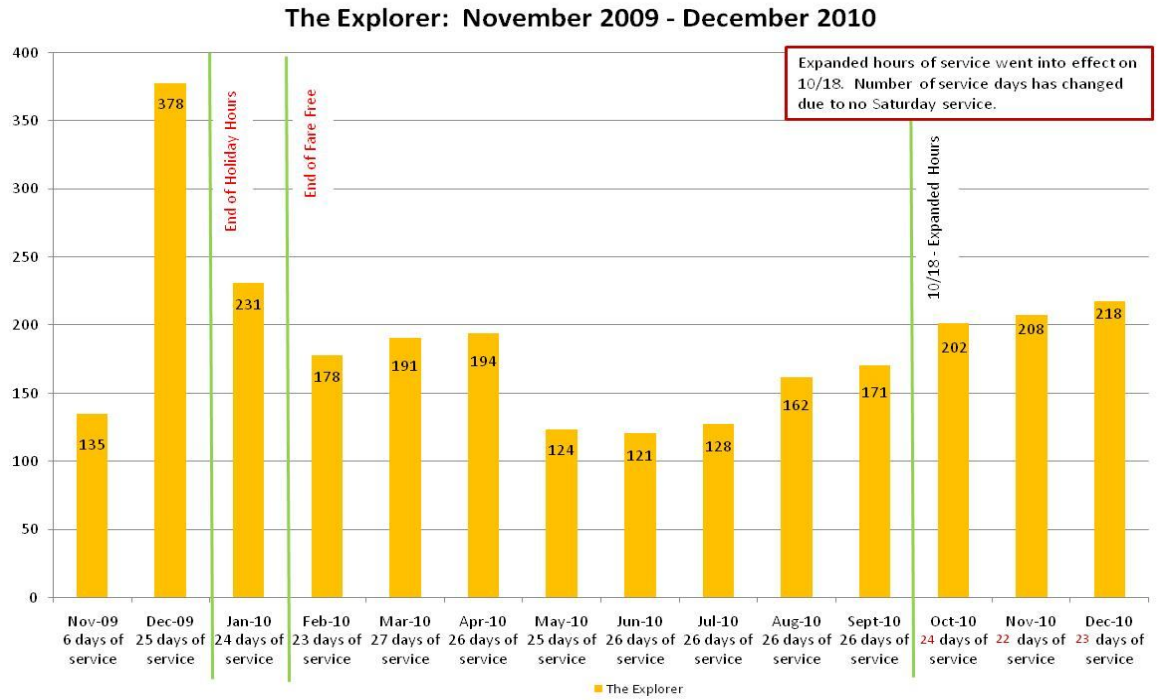
Ridership for October, November and December 2010 represent three of the four highest ridership months since the system began charging fares.

The chart on the next page reflects additional ridership that has not been captured in past reports. Group trips by organizations including the Christiansburg Community Action, Christiansburg Civic League, Christiansburg Aquatic Center, and Christiansburg Middle School after School Tutoring program, Radford University Education Office of Independent Living used Go Anywhere during the months of July, August and November. That ridership is displayed separately in the lighter green section of the bar chart.

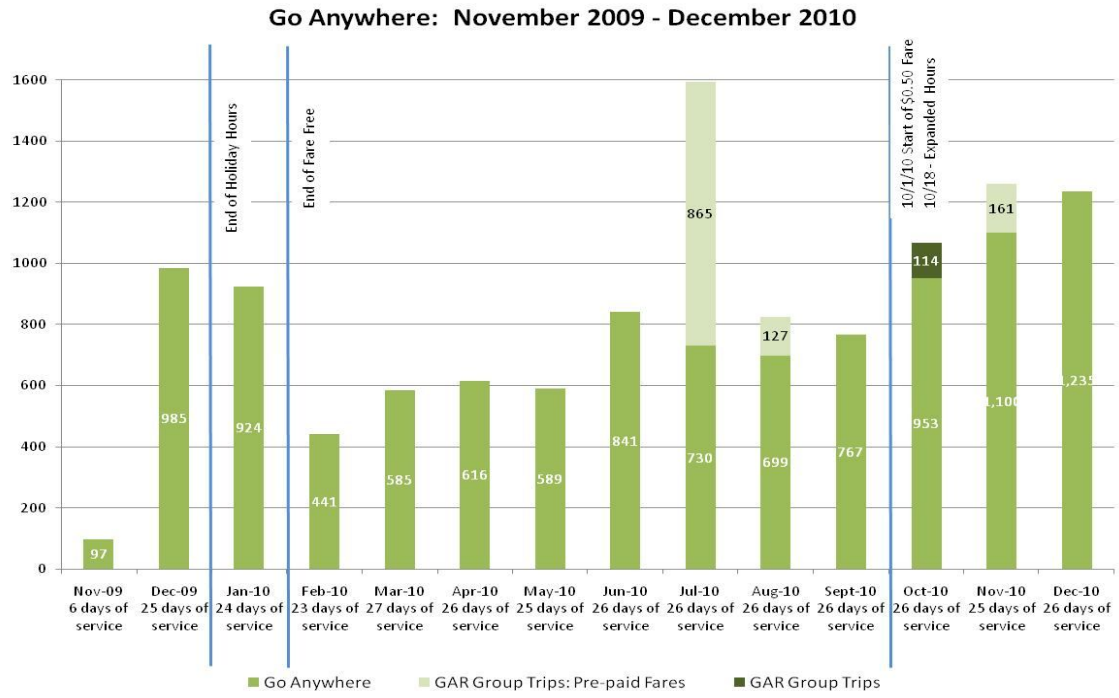


Total Ridership for the Shoppers Express declined for the fourth quarter to 552 riders vs. 1,177 in the third quarter. The reduction of service days, 78 service days in the third quarter vs. 38 days in the fourth quarter, contributed to this decline. However the route saw a slight increase in the passengers per revenue hour which is standard industry indicator efficiency.

Total ridership for the Explorer route increased significantly in the fourth quarter to 628 riders which was a 36.2 percent change or plus 167 riders. Monthly ridership for the route increased for the sixth straight month. Passengers per revenue hour also increased this quarter vs. the third quarter.

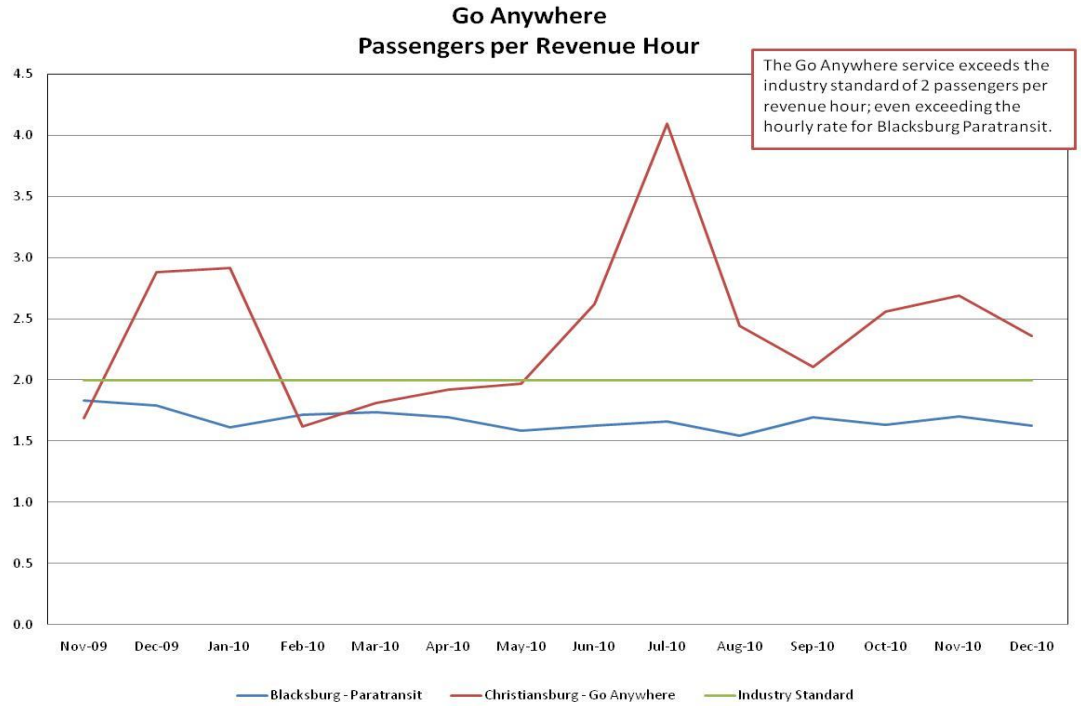


The ridership for the Go Anywhere continues to increase significantly. The 3,563 riders reflect an increase of 375 riders vs. the third quarter or 11.8 percent.



In Depth Review of Go Anywhere

The Go Anywhere service, which operates as a "demand-response" service, compares favorably in the category of passengers per revenue hour. The industry standard for demand response is two passengers per hour which the Go Anywhere on average exceeds most months. The Go Anywhere also exceeds the passengers per revenue hour for BT Access which provides a similar demand service in Blacksburg. In July Go Anywhere attained a high of four passengers per revenue hour which was double the industry average.



The 79 new customers added the month of December was a record for the Go Anywhere bringing the new passengers total for the service to 645. Based on the preceding months, the number of new passengers for the service is expected to continue to increase monthly.

The chart below also reflects Pre-Route match numbers. This refers to the 227 total passengers added from the beginning of service in late November through March 2010. During this period new passengers by month was not tracked for the service and the software used at that point was not capable of looking back and capturing monthly data. Group trips are not included in these numbers.

New Passengers - GAR Updated Jan 2011	
Month	**Number of New Passengers Added**
Pre-Route Match (5 months)	227
April	33
May	44
June	33
July	33
August	42
September	36
October	58
November	60
December	79
Total (Including pre-routematch)	**645**

During the quarter the Go Anywhere touched the lives of citizens each day by providing trips from near their homes and work locations to medical visits, work, shopping, and other errands. Recapped below are the 12 most popular locations requested during the quarter in orders of volume:

- NRV Mall, Walmart, Kmart, G&H Appliance, Montgomery County Government Center, Ryan's, Long John Silvers, Burger King, Social Services, KFC, Arby's, and Big Lots.

On a typical day the Go Anywhere serves double digit unique individual riders. For example, on December 1, 2010, 48 trips were scheduled by 31 unique individual customers. Recapped below are some of the actual destinations for that day:

- Montgomery County Department of Social Services, S. Pepper Street
- Aquatic Center, North Franklin Street
- Virginia Techniques Gymnastics Center, Roanoke Street
- NRV Eye Clinic, South Franklin Street
- Arby's, Market Street
- Montgomery County Government Center, Roanoke Street
- Kmart, Laurel Street (One trip to connect with Smartway.)
- Christiansburg Recreation Center, North Franklin Street
- English Meadow, West Main Street

Customer service is a priority for the Go Anywhere service. On an average day the scheduler fields 55 calls lasting approximately 3.8 minutes each.

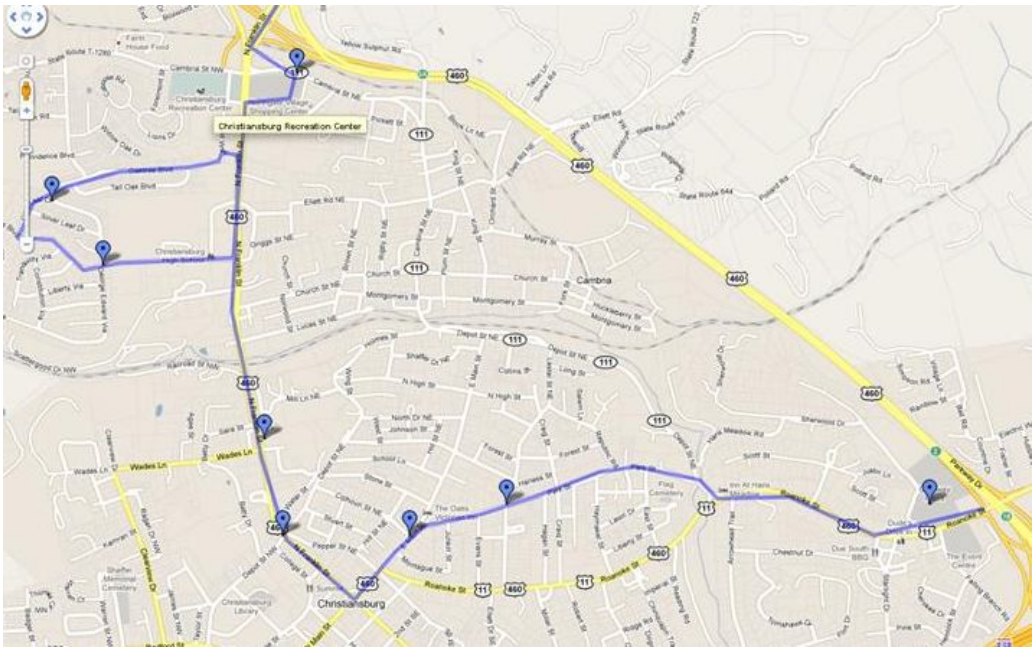
BT Commuter Service

Currently seven customers have signed up and are riding daily on the Commuter Service. Several more have indicated an interest in riding in the near future.

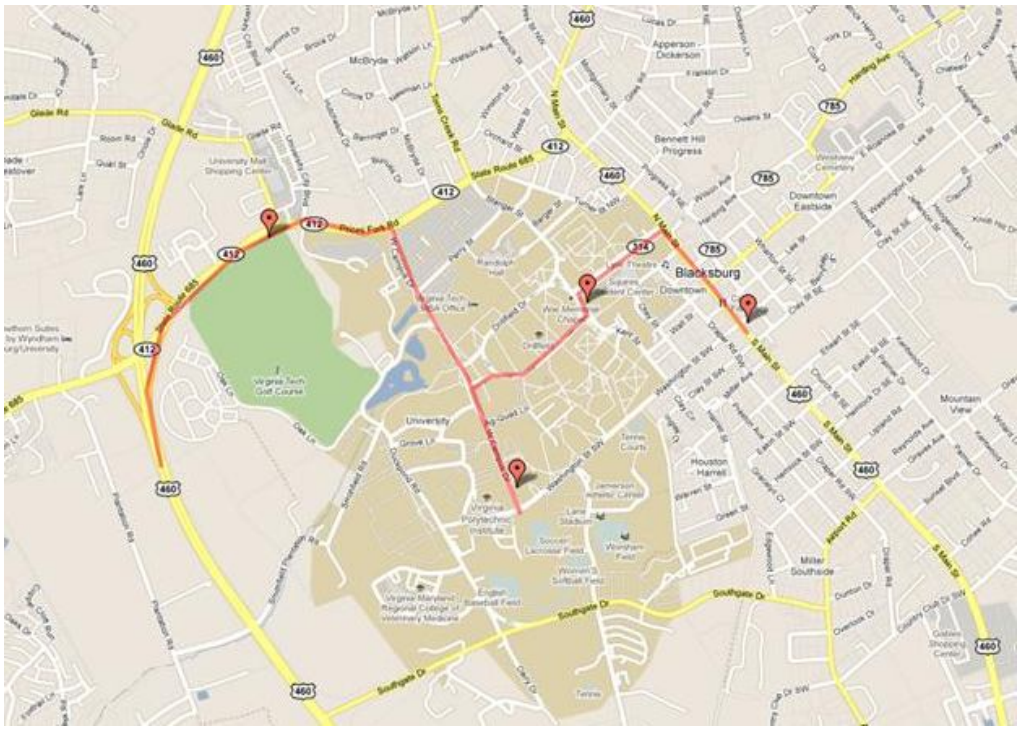
Planning for the commuter service began in October 2010, with several interest meetings being held in both Blacksburg and Christiansburg. Based on the results of those, meetings over 100 individuals expressed interest in using the service. After plotting pick-ups locations in the Town of Christiansburg and destinations in the Town of Blacksburg and cross referencing the same data with preferred travel times, the timing and route was set as noted below:

- Pickups begin at 7 a.m., with the last pick up at 7:30 a.m.

- Return trip begins pickups at 5:10 p.m.
- The BT Commuter route currently follows the below route for pick-ups; route is subject to change depending on riders! Current and potential stops are represented by the blue flags.



- The red route represents the current BT Commuter route; route is subject to change depending on riders. The red flags represent current drop-off points in the Blacksburg area; we are still exploring a couple more options!



Marketing Update Review

Recapped below is the "Quarters" marketing campaign which has been used to promote the fare change in the Go Anywhere route on bus rears, newspaper ads, bus cards.

BT has continued to get the word out about bus services in Christiansburg, between October 1 to December 31, 2010, with over 20 articles, editorials, website announcements, advertisement campaigns, and press announcements. Here are some highlights:

- The Roanoke Times (12/21/10) reminded readers that BT had made changes to improve routes including reducing fares from $2 to 50 cents; a new commuter route between the two towns that will launch early January.

- A 12/19 editorial reminded readers that, "the expanded service in Christiansburg is still relatively new and gaining traction…"
- An 11/8/10 Collegiate Times article about nine new BT electric hybrid buses (purchased with Federal stimulus funds) introduced into the fleet.
- An 11/2/10 article in RU's student paper announced that a new bus system was to begin operations in Radford with a target to start by August 2011.
- BT even made news, by providing Go Anywhere rides for a Christiansburg Ghost Ride on 10/30/10.

The following article ran in the Roanoke Times in December and is just one example. Many other articles are available online.

Council hopes tweaks improve bus use

The budget in talks, Blacksburg Transit has changed times and prices for several routes.

Lerone Graham
lerone.graham@roanoke.com, 381-8621

Then: In January, councilmen said they would take a wait-and-see approach to the new Blacksburg Transit routes in Christiansburg. Passenger use and revenue for the system had started off slower than some had hoped.

Now: Christiansburg councilmen said with the new budget process, the funding for Blacksburg Transit will be prioritized along with all of the other services this year.

The town council months ago wanted ridership to improve to justify the town's annual $218,000 contribution.

Blacksburg Transit has since made changes to route times and prices to help increase ridership.

The Explorer Route now has earlier and longer hours on weekdays and does not run on weekends. The Go Anywhere Route has earlier and longer hours and doesn't run on Sunday. The Shopper Express Route's hours were reduced and it now connects at the recreation center. The Go Anywhere Route price has also been reduced from $2 to 50 cents.

Whatever happend to

Blacksburg Transit has also implemented a commuter route between the two towns that will launch early January.

Even with the changes, councilmen said they won't know if the service will continue being funded until some time early next year as the budget process advances.

"We've started to look at the budget in a slightly different vein. We'll make sure we see what services the community wants and see how we can best accommodate," Councilman Jim Vanhoozier said.

"The buses are one thing to consider."

Councilman Brad Stipes said based on recent reports, ridership is still low. The council is hopeful that the changes will create an increase, Stipes said.

He said the council is not close to a decision on keeping the bus service intact, but should have a clear idea the first quarter of next year. The fact that the council is working to prioritize services and weigh costs and needs much earlier to prepare the budget will help them with the decision making process, Stipes said.

MATT GENTRY | The Roanoke Times

Driver Tim Coles travels with Kim King on the Christiansburg Explorer bus's half-hour loop Monday. King was using the route for the first time after traveling on Blacksburg Transit's Two Town Trolley.

> "The Blacksburg Transit Christiansburg routes are important because they offer citizens access."
>
> Rebecca Martin
> Blacksburg Transit Director

"I am very encouraged that this year we're approaching our budget differently," Stipes said.

"That's just one of the many different things that we have in our budget now that is now going to be scrutinized and compared with other priorities."

After BT implemented new route hours and a fare decrease, they saw a spike in ridership. Monthly totals for all routes jumped from 1,215 to 1,554 from September to October, when the changes took effect.

With the council prioritizing services for the upcoming budget, Blacksburg Transit Director Rebecca Martin is confident that the town's residents have already spoken about their desire for bus service. When a survey went out prior to service expanding into Christiansburg, Martin said the result was unprecedented, with 38 percent of every household in the town responding.

"This told Council that citizens were interested in the service," Martin said.

"The Blacksburg Transit Christiansburg routes are important because they offer citizens access," to places of employment and leisure during a tough economic period, she said.

Martin said the commuter routes, launching Jan. 3, will begin with one or two buses, and if successful will expand to additional routes. It is a subscription service, so those interested must sign up.

It's important that BT continue expanding service options in Christiansburg, Martin said, because a big goal for the council and BT is to provide residents with affordable and accessible transportation options.

Martin encourages residents to voice their questions and concerns regarding current and future service to Town Council and BT so they can continue to fulfill the needs of residents.

Transportation Survey Conducted on Christiansburg Routes

BT is in the middle of a transportation review of all routes, including the expanded routes in Christiansburg. As part of this review, a sample survey was conducted. Twenty seven people were surveyed on Christiansburg routes.

Highlights from the survey include:

- Gender of riders were 50% male / 50% female;
- 34.6% of the riders were age 25 – 34; 26.9% were 16 – 24; and 19.2% were 55-64;
- 66.7% do not own a car;
- 74.1% do not have a valid driver's license;
- 86.2% of the respondents make $34,999 or less;
- 16% are students or staff or VT;
- In rating BT services, 100% said the service was ok, good or very good;
- 11.5% were concerned with hours of bus service and areas served by BT; and
- Most excitingly, 100% said they would recommend BT to a friend of colleague!

There were a total of 87 respondents with 67 comments from those riding the route within or to Christiansburg. Those comments included:

- Great service
- Great service & great staff
- It is cheap
- Cheap and a green way to help the planet
- Because it is so helpful
- Cheap and pretty reliable
- It's good
- Nice ride
- The buses have to be washed as they used to be
- Very depending, a good service
- It's a good service with great fair.

- Excellent service
- Convenience
- Depends. I've been late to work enough to get fired. BT's ok but would like see schedule improvements
- Cheap fair
- Its' cheap and if your in a bind, There's the BT
- I like the serve and price VERY WELL
- Good easy way to get around
- Good service
- Very good system to most areas with professional and friendly