

TriCounty Link to extend bus service to Johns Island

BY TENISHA WALDO
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Deborah Harnish of Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach sees it all the time: residents living on Johns Island who forgo doctors' appointments because they have no transportation.

"A lot of folks just don't go or they end up having to pay a neighbor (to take them)," she said.

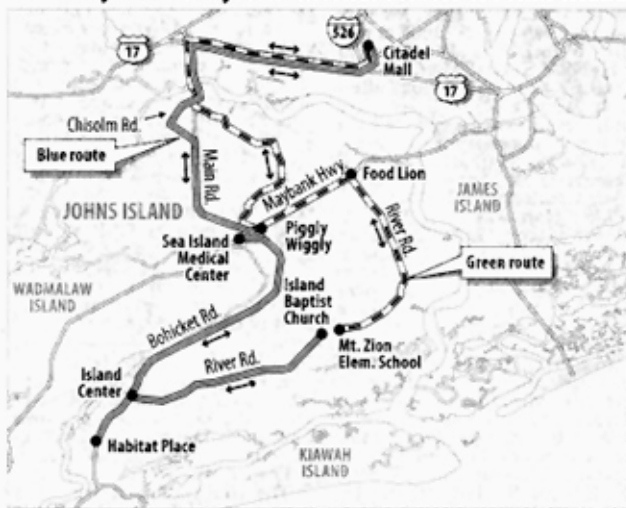
Harnish hopes those residents will take advantage of TriCounty Link's newly extended service onto the island. Starting Monday, Johns Islanders can hop aboard buses that run along the heavily traveled corridors of the island, including Main, Bohicket and River roads.

And it will be free to ride until Feb. 1. Prizes also will be given away during the introductory period.

Buses will run on weekdays from 5:45 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. "If the need is there, we'll expand to Saturday," Executive Director Will Hutto said.

TriCounty Link set up an infor-

TriCounty Link bus system extends service to Johns Island



mation table Friday at the Piggly Wiggly off Maybank Highway to let residents know about Monday's kickoff.

Harnish and Jakki Jefferson, also

of Our Lady of Mercy, stopped by to pick up fliers about the service so they could spread the word. Harnish said she'd like to try out taking the bus. "I would love to

Want to ride?

For more information on the extended bus service, which is free until Feb. 1, call TriCounty Link at 800-966-6631 or 899-4096.

take it around to run errands or if I have a home visit on the other side of the island," the social worker said.

Johns Island resident Dara Heikes pulled over, too, to see what all the excitement was about. "Wow, this is great," she said as she toured a bus. "We desperately need public transportation out here."

The island had bus service twice before, but both attempts failed because of low ridership.

However, Hutto said he is "quite confident that we're going to see tremendous success" with the new routes. He said the rural bus system met with island residents several times last year and realized there is a dire need for more transportation options.

TriCounty Link, formerly called the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Rural Transportation Management Association, has focused on the McClellanville-Awendaw area, linking riders with two Mount Pleasant stops operated by the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority.

The latest Johns Island stops also will transfer to CARTA routes. Riders would pay \$2.25 to board a TriCounty Link bus and would be given a transfer slip to board a CARTA bus. The return trip would differ slightly, however, because riders would pay CARTA's fare — \$1.25 for fixed routes or \$2 for Express — plus 25 cents to switch buses. CARTA charges for transfers.

Hutto said TriCounty Link plans to expand its Edisto Island service, and eventually will extend service to Wadmalaw Island. "We'll have a truly linked Lowcountry," he said.

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