

BERKELEY AND DORCHESTER COUNTIES

Rides free on expanded Link bus system

Many rural passengers will face less waiting time

BY ANDY PARAS
The Post and Courier

MONCK'S CORNER — The free ride is just beginning for TriCounty Link customers.

Starting today, passengers will ride for free on all TriCounty Link bus routes until Nov. 30.

The promotion is in conjunction with the rural bus system's unveiling of expanded commuter express routes to and from Ridgeville, Summerville, Moncks Corner and Goose Creek that also begin today.

Officials hope the new routes will pry more drivers from their

cars, help those in the rural areas who've long been without transportation and pave the way for more rural routes.

The routes have been carefully coordinated with the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority bus system to provide seamless travel into Charleston, officials said.

"It's a long time coming but it's coming," Barbara Flynn, TriCounty Link's community outreach coordinator, told a handful of riders on board a bus in North Charleston this week. "It's on the way."

Passenger Shadae Parker of Moncks Corner said she al-

ready liked the service before she found out that the new routes would cut her wait time by at least an hour after taking classes at Trident Tech.

"It gives me some time to do my homework and hang out," she said.

The 21-year-old takes the bus twice a week to classes to become a medical office specialist. "When I do get a car, I still plan on riding a bus."

One route will head from the new Berkeley County Office Building on U.S. Highway 52 in Moncks Corner to the county's satellite office on U.S. 52 in Goose Creek before con-

On the Web

See TriCounty Link routes at www.ridetricountylink.com.

necting with a CARTA bus at the Kmart Super Center at Rivers Avenue and Otranto Road in North Charleston.

The other route will start at Ridgeville Town Hall and go to the old shopping center parking lot at U.S. Highway 78 and Berlin G. Myers Parkway in Summerville before dropping off commuters at the Kmart in North Charleston for the CARTA trip downtown.

Leaders for charitable agencies in Dorchester County and Moncks Corner praised the new routes because rising gas

prices have made it hard for people with jobs to get there and even harder for people without jobs to find jobs.

"I think this will be effective," said Ernestine Cooper, information specialist for Trident United Way in Moncks Corner. Cooper said she knows of people who walk from Cross to Moncks Corner just to get on the bus to Charleston. She said she hopes this will lead to more routes.

Will Hutto, executive director of the Moncks Corner-based bus system, said they hope to someday expand routes even further to towns such as Cross, St. Stephen, St. George and Harleyville.

"A lot of it depends on the

success of what we do here," he said.

Success means more riders. Flynn said they hope the new routes will see the same results as expanded routes on Johns Island and in McClellanville. The McClellanville route has seen more than a 40 percent jump in passengers since May, she said.

Hutto and frequent riders alike say it will take some time to pry people from their cars, but the price tag — free — will certainly help.

"It's kind of hard to get people out of their cars," Hutto said.

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