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Public Works to Expand VITRAN Routes, Extend Hours of Service With \$375,000 Federal Grant

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DPW VITRAN managerial staff greets passengers. By. V.I. DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS

The V.I. Department of Public Works announced this week that it has received a grant of \$375,000 from the Federal Transit Administration's 2022 Areas of Persistent Poverty grant program, and the department plans on expanding Virgin Islands transit routes and extending hours of service with the funds.

FTA's Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP) Program supports projects that address the transportation challenges faced by areas of persistent poverty, Public Works said.

Using the grant funds, DPW will conduct a study for potential transit improvements including where to provide more frequent and expanded service, assessing the feasibility of park-and-ride

locations, expanding service hours for existing routes, a transit hub, as well as new routes for shorter ride times and more direct access to destinations, according to the release.

“The territory’s current transit service includes routes that were implemented before significant developments occurred within the last two decades,” DPW Transportation Planner Andrew Ray explained. Coupled with the increased number of residents and visitors, along with the shift in the geographic distribution of destinations and population, he said it warranted a review of the current services provided.

“Additionally, the lack of weekend fixed route services creates a hardship for transit dependent populations that are left with either no options for travel on the weekend, or the need to utilize a more expensive taxi service to reach essential destinations,” Mr. Ray stated.

According to Public Works, a survey to quantify the need for weekend service, along with a feasibility study of expanded service days and hours will allow the territory to provide services that are more closely matched to the needs of residents and visitors. The department also intends to study the effectiveness of closing gaps with conventional fixed route service and with micro-transit routes that provide on demand service, according to the release.

“New route alignments, coupled with more flexible route options can serve a greater number of people that are dependent on public transit in a way the better utilizes limited budgetary resources,” Mr. Ray stated.