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## **BUMPER TO BUMPER**

# **Now is time to speak up about express bus**

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With gas prices soaring, it's a good time to think about public transportation. And there's an important public transportation debate happening right now.

Charlotte Area Transit System runs express commuter buses between uptown and outlying areas. Many Lake Norman residents ride the popular 77X and 48X express buses between north Mecklenburg and uptown. There's also a bus to Lincoln County.

In Mooresville, the bus is called the 83X. The bus has struggled with park-and-ride options in recent years, which has hurt its popularity somewhat. But the people who ride it are dedicated. Ridership remains steady, with a 2.4 percent increase year to date.

All of CATS' bus routes are subsidized by tax money. In Mecklenburg that money comes from the half-cent sales tax. In Mooresville, the town pays about \$95,000 a year to bring the 83X to town.

This year, Mooresville commissioners have questioned whether they want to keep paying the subsidy. And CATS' longstanding policy is that Mecklenburg tax money shouldn't go to transportation in other counties.

That puts the 83X in jeopardy.

No matter what you think, there are several opportunities for residents to make their voices heard.

- CATS is hosting a public meeting at 11 a.m. today to talk about the 83X. It will be in the Francis Auditorium in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg main library, 310 N. Tryon St., Charlotte.
- Supporters of 83X who live in Troutman are planning to go to the Board of Aldermen meeting tonight to talk about the bus. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. at town hall.
- Mooresville commissioners will be debating the subsidy at a meeting May 20. They likely will make a decision that night, although the bus subsidy will be voted on formally later as part of the entire budget. It starts at 6 p.m. at Town Hall.

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