



# ASHE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF B. PHIL HOWELL      CHIEF DEPUTY DANNY HOUCK

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February 8, 2021

To: Ashley Honeycutt

From: Sheriff Howell

Re: Commissioners Agenda Request

This letter is to request placement of the agenda for the upcoming Commissioners meeting. The purpose for this placement is to request the movement of funds from various line items in the detention center budget. These funds are requested to be moved to the Detention's budget Capital Outlay/Vehicles line item 10.4320.540.00 to purchase a new inmate transport van. The current van was purchased new in 2007 and is in bad shape. Attached you will find a packet with photos detailing the need for a new van. The van we are looking at purchasing to replace the current van is from Ashe County Ford it is a 2021 Ford Transit van totaling \$29,520.65 , this includes the 3% tax and tag fees . Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Best regards,

Sheriff B. Phil Howell



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Greetings County Commissioners,

First I would like to thank all of our county commissioners for your support. Your support is key to our continued success in our detention center. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to present a proposal for a new transport van. We know that you have to make many decisions for our county and you will make your decision based on what is best. As employees and citizens of Ashe County you have our utmost respect as we know the hard job that you have.

Our current transport van was purchased from Ashe County Ford in 2007 and has 47,250 miles on it, even though it doesn't have a lot of miles, 14 years has taken its toll. Most transport vans (and the one we would like to purchase) are equipped with a box insert that has at least three compartments that you can use to separate inmates that need to be separated, for example inmates that are co-defendants or most recently quarantined inmates from other inmates. These compartments also would give us the ability to transport male and female inmates at the same time. Currently on court dates we have to make many trips back and forth to the court house to transport inmates. For safety reasons we always use at least two jailers when transporting multiple inmates, this leaves us shorthanded in the jail.

As you will notice in the pictures I have included there is very little room in the driver's seat area of our current van. When deputies or detention officers have to go on long trips to deliver inmates to prison this makes for a very uncomfortable ride. With the cage behind the front seats there is not enough room to adjust the seats to a comfortable position, this makes a three hour trip to Raleigh very hard on the officers. As you will also notice from the pictures the inmates have done damage to the van over the years. In the new transport van there will be cameras so that the accompanying officer can watch the inmates at all times and see what they're doing, also with the cameras it will make it harder for inmates to cause damage, but if they do we will have proof to charge them and hold them accountable. The camera system will also reduce liability of civil suits that an inmate can bring by intentionally hurting themselves in transport.

Our current transport van wasn't built to be an inmate transport van, it doesn't have the security it needs to have nor is it safe for the inmates. If you will notice in the pictures we have to set a stool at the door for the inmates to get in the van with their shackles on, this is by no



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means the safest but it's what we have to do because the inmates can't get in the van any other way. This is a serious liability if an inmate falls. The new transport van would have steps that drop down for the inmates to get in and out, a much safer set up. You can see the difference from the photos we have provided for you to look at. We feel like it our responsibility to provide the best and safest security possible when we are transporting our inmates rather it be to court or to prison and as you can clearly see our current van doesn't provide the security or safety it needs to.

Our current van is also becoming mechanically unsound. We have had to have it worked on several times over the past couple years. Most recently the gas gauge has stopped working, so we have to make sure we fill it up often. This also presents a security problem when you're taking inmates on a trip to prison. During one of our recent trips taking 7 inmates to piedmont prison the van broke down at the prison after the inmates had been delivered. The officers were able to work on the van and get it fixed enough to get them back to the detention center. Had the van broke down during transport several officers would have had to be dispatched to pick up the inmates and take them on to prison.

This has been a trying year for everyone. Our detention staff have worked hard to maintain the safety and security of our inmates while dealing with staffing shortages and inmate quarantines. We realize that we haven't brought in as much revenue this year as we have in the past years but I think that's to be expected with the crazy year we have had. All that being said I am very proud of the fact that we haven't had a Covid-19 outbreak in the detention center.

We put forth every effort to maintain our detention center and keep it in the best condition as we can. We take our jobs very seriously and are aware of the responsibilities that we have been entrusted with. If you agree to the purchase of a new transport van it should last our department for many years to come and be a valuable asset to us. Thank you in advance for you time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Captain Linda Carrow



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**To:** Sheriff B. Phil Howell

**From:** Detention Captain Linda Carrow

**Ref:** Jail Transport Van Upgrade

**Date:** 02/02/2021

Our current transport van in the jail is 17 years old and in need of immediate replacement. Please see attached photos and descriptions.



As you can see we have to have inmates use a small step stool to get into and out of the van. This creates a dangerous situation.



This stool recently broke while an shackled inmate was stepping up and two detention officers had to catch him from falling backwards.





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**Inmates have to step on these small stools while wearing shackles which makes the process much more difficult and potentially dangerous.**



**At some point someone removed some seatbelts so that inmates could get into the back of the van easier. This allows us no way to safely secure an inmate for travel on roadways.**



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Inmates have an access under the cage to reach into the officers' area with the current design. Also please note the rust on the cage.



Inmates have, over the years, removed the plastic AC vents and possibly used them to make tools like handcuff keys or shanks (inmate knives).

Inmates have, over the years, exposed wires by destroying panels.



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Officers of size have minimal room in the driver and passenger seats. This is a photo of Detention Lt. Matt Hartzog with only 2.5" of clearance between his abdomen and the steering wheel. The seat is as far back as it can go in this photo. Lt. Hartzog is not the largest officer in the jail and some employees cannot drive it safely.



Several warning lights are always on despite being regularly serviced.



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With the van being 17 years old (a 2007 Ford E-350) it is showing its age.



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