

# Regional Transit Engagement Series 2017



**Phase II Summary Report  
January 23, 2018**

• Phase II Summary Report •

**Introduction**

This Summary Report outlines the input gathered during the Regional Transit Engagement Series Phase II stakeholder engagement process that occurred between August and October 2017. The Report includes the following sections: Introduction, Project Background, Key Findings, Phase II Process Details, Response Summary by Question, Public Opinion and Transit Stakeholder Surveys Summary, What’s Next and an Appendix.

*Project Background*

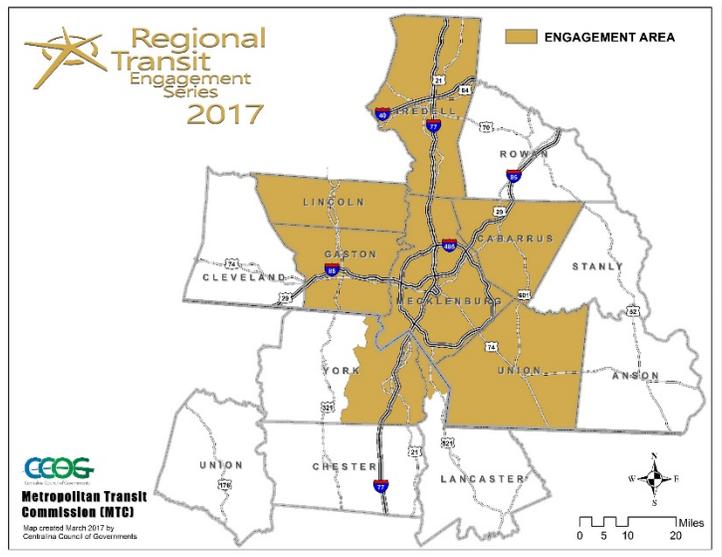
The Regional Transit Engagement Series (RTES) is a continuation of the CONNECT Our Future dialogue around transit. This series is designed to provide an opportunity to have focused conversations with local governments and stakeholders about regional transit, well before any planning takes place.

RTES is a collaboration between the [Metropolitan Transit Commission \(MTC\)](#) and [Centralina COG](#) intended to:

- more fully understand key stakeholder values and interests related to regional transit
- develop and strengthen regional relationships
- engage those in surrounding counties that may be most impacted by a growing region and transportation network
- develop consensus-based next steps

The Regional Transit Engagement Series is an opportunity for communities to express their aspirations, concerns, values, and interests around long-term transit. The foundation for successful transit planning is public understanding and an early determination of community values and interests surrounding transit. This work will inform the update of the CATS 2030 Transit System Corridor Plan, future transit planning in communities outside of Mecklenburg, and the identification of next best steps for long-term regional transit coordination.

The engagement area for this project includes Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, and Union counties and the urbanized areas of Lancaster and York counties in South Carolina. The first phase of engagement, designed for local government staff, included county-level meetings held in March and May 2017.



RTES Engagement Area



# Regional Transit Engagement Series 2017

The second phase of county-level engagement was held between August and October 2017 and was designed for local elected officials, state and federal elected officials and their staff, local government staff, and private sector representatives.

### Key Findings

Without question, inputs from the elected officials and private sector leaders were informative, thoughtful, and demonstrated the interest and passion that leaders have about their community and its future. Regional transit was seen not only as an important means of transportation, but also as a catalyst to attract and retain businesses, improve quality of life, provide economic access, and to raise the stature of the Charlotte region on a national and global scale. Key themes emerged around the discussions on regional transit, including:

- the ability to maintain our national and global competitiveness as a region from attracting industry, to business growth to job retention,
- the ability to provide mobility options for a growing region and a changing population, and
- the opportunity to provide upward social mobility by providing access to jobs, housing, services, medical, and other destinations to those that may not have access to other means of transportation.

## RTES Phase II: Process Details



Regional Transit Engagement Series Process Map

Phase II occurred during August – October 2017 and consisted of ten (10) county-level meetings in Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg (north and south) and Union counties, Rock Hill, South Carolina, and two make-up meetings held at the Centralina COG for anyone unable to make their county’s meeting.

# Regional Transit Engagement Series 2017

Invitees included local, state, and federal elected officials and their staff, economic development and private sector stakeholders, leaders of institutions, other community stakeholders, county and municipal managers, planning directors, planners, transportation planners, transportation directors, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) staff, Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) members from CRTPO, GCLMPO, CRMPO, and RRRPO, Catawba Regional COG staff, CATS staff and Centralina COG staff.

Each meeting consisted of a robust transit discussion that focused on the county where the meeting was being held (except for the make-up meetings). A total of 138 people attended the Phase II meetings, not including CCOG and CATS staff, who attended all meetings.

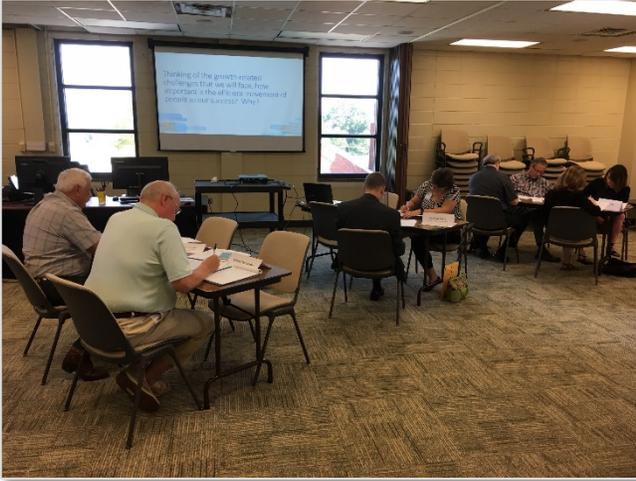
The second phase of engagement helped establish clarity on background, context, and next steps for regional transit discussion and planning, including both challenges and opportunities. This stakeholder engagement is supplemented by a public survey designed to gauge public attitudes and values related to regional transit.

The goals of the phase II engagement were to:

- provide the audience with context for a broader regional transit discussion,
- understand local benefits, concerns, and sensitive issues related to expanded transit,
- forecast RTES Phase II engagement process and roles, and
- develop and strengthen relationships.



# Regional Transit Engagement Series 2017





**Regional Transit**  
Engagement Series **2017**

A sample agenda from the Phase II meetings is included in the Appendix.

The table below outlines the meeting schedule for the Phase II meetings.

<b>Phase II Meeting Schedule – 2017</b>					
<b>#</b>	<b>County Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Venue &amp; Address</b>
1	Gaston	August 24	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Gastonia	Gastonia Conference Center 145 S. Marietta Street
2	Lincoln	August 25	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Lincolnton	James W. Warren Citizens Center Commissioners Room – 3rd Floor 115 W. Main Street
3	Iredell	August 28	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Mooresville	Charles Mack Citizen Center Moore Room 215 N. Main Street
4	North Mecklenburg	August 28	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Davidson	Davidson College Presbyterian Church Congregation House 218 Concord Road
5	South Carolina	August 29	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Rock Hill	Manchester Meadows Conference Room – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor 337 E. Mt. Gallant Road
6	Union	September 13	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Monroe	Old Armory Community Center 500 S. Johnson Street
7	South Mecklenburg	September 13	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Matthews	Matthews Town Hall Council Chambers 232 Matthews Station Street
8	Make-Up Meeting #1	September 22	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Charlotte	Centralina COG Offices Catawba Room 9815 David Taylor Drive
9	Make-Up Meeting #2	October 2	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Charlotte	Centralina COG Offices Catawba Room 9815 David Taylor Drive
10	Cabarrus	October 5	9:00 am – 11:00 am	Concord	Cabarrus County Government Center Multi-Purpose Room 65 Church Street South

## RTES Phase II: Summary of Meeting Responses by Question

The following is a summary of responses to each question posed during the RTES Phase II meetings. A sample question sheet from the Phase II meetings is included in the Appendix.

<b>Question 1: What did you find most interesting about what you just heard (Background and Phase I results)?</b>	
<i>A sample of the unique responses for Question 1 are included below.</i>	
<b>Cabarrus County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need paradigm shift around the value of transit – from possible negative or limited connotation to transit as a community asset for all people.</li> <li>• Need more cross-county and inter-county connectivity.</li> <li>• Who pays for it – short and long term?</li> <li>• Need new ways to positively influence and catalyze local, state, and federal legislators around transit.</li> </ul>
<b>Gaston County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning more about Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) Ex-officio membership – representation vs. voting/non-voting status – understanding that structure better.</li> <li>• Hearing discussion about light rail heading west and how to stay involved in that conversation. There is interest in cooperating in connection efforts. Must keep momentum growing.</li> </ul>
<b>Iredell County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement on transit as community and economic development driver across the region.</li> <li>• There are a lot of competing interests for same money.</li> <li>• Number of commuters traveling from Iredell to Mecklenburg (14,000 seems low).</li> <li>• How does SC figure in? Coordination between state/federal representatives across NC/SC is needed!</li> </ul>
<b>Lincoln County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we use or access existing rail lines?</li> <li>• How did representation on the MTC come about?</li> <li>• Geography is key in Lincoln County. East and West Lincoln County have different needs. Individuals have different transit/mobility needs.</li> </ul>
<b>North Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a regional look at transit and surrounding areas are interested.</li> <li>• During Phase I, communities expressed interest in all kinds of transit options.</li> </ul>
<b>South Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question about the expectation of growth numbers. Seeing the reality – graphically – of many thousands of people moving to Charlotte and the region may have an impact towards urgency.</li> <li>• Light rail – build it, they will come. Even when you build it, you will always be behind.</li> <li>• Local planning agencies may not address issues on a regional, inter-county basis. Silo-ing vs. broader thinking.</li> </ul>
<b>South Carolina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison to others</li> <li>• Out of area employment demand – beyond individual jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Bi-state region (e.g., St. Louis/Kansas City)</li> </ul>



# Regional Transit Engagement Series 2017

<b>Question 1: What did you find most interesting about what you just heard (Background and Phase I results)?</b>	
<b>Union County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding specifics regarding funding, especially related to sales tax-differences between counties.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What stigmas and mindsets may impact what types of transit will get used, valued.</li> <li>• Freight needs and expectations are a real issue regarding competition for space vs. transit</li> <li>• Demographics are changing. There is greater acceptance and interest in transit. Upgrades are needed! Improve frequency of rides and experience for the end user.</li> <li>• Funding for full system not there. Creates piecemeal approach and possible conflict among geographies.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination with real estate important.</li> <li>• Use existing rail for commuter traffic-need double track in some areas.</li> <li>• Moving people is a major factor in global competitiveness.</li> <li>• Economics pushing cultural changes.</li> <li>• Economic mobility requires access/mobility.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 2: Is there anything that you didn't hear that you thought you would? What's missing?</b>	
<i>A sample of the unique responses for Question 2 are included below.</i>	
<b>Cabarrus County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need public education and awareness building about preferences for transit. Build from first round of CONNECT Our Future public engagement. Focus on what people value.</li> <li>• Transit is better for safety and productivity (work as you ride).</li> <li>• Information on the operational or governance structure of regional transit.</li> </ul>
<b>Gaston County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environmental impacts of expanding transit. Understand perceived detriments to transit and how to address them.</li> <li>• Are there other places within the region that are like Gaston County and also regions to look to outside of our region?</li> <li>• Would like to see more comparison related to population and growth density.</li> </ul>
<b>Iredell County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more information on robust growth – current and projected.</li> <li>• There is a sense of disconnection – Iredell County is in CRTPO, but is in a different NCDOT division. Regional vs. divisional – perhaps not getting an accurate picture.</li> <li>• How would regional transit work if transit planning/funding allocation is based in Charlotte?</li> </ul>
<b>Lincoln County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer service. Focus on needs of people.</li> <li>• Relationship between transit planning and MPO, NCDOT -- what is it? how is it structured?</li> </ul>
<b>North Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The visit to Denver, Colorado helped to see what is possible. Seeing what is possible made transit concepts less abstract. Perhaps another trip west is in order?</li> </ul>

<b>Question 2: Is there anything that you didn't hear that you thought you would? What's missing?</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to have other regions to look at and set stage for what we are talking about. Denver is just one example.</li> <li>• Must get beyond Mecklenburg County.</li> </ul>
<b>South Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting municipalities and higher education institutions.</li> <li>• Connection between transit and NCDOT. Focus on other modes is missing. System integration is needed.</li> <li>• Autonomous Connected Vehicles -- system disruption.</li> </ul>
<b>South Carolina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State line issues and policy barriers.</li> <li>• Lack of incentives to move people to transit (e.g., gas price and parking cost)</li> <li>• Transit corridors to alleviate congestion and ability to build our way out</li> <li>• Lag time between approval/construction/being operational</li> </ul>
<b>Union County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynx Silver Line coming into Union County and the location of a terminus in Union County. Generally, more info on Silver Line.</li> <li>• Possibility of using existing rail lines – can we use them or not?</li> <li>• What would the funding arrangement be like for new lines – similar to the two current lines?</li> <li>• What do residents think about expanding transit? Would the general population support it? Perhaps yes, just need to document it for elected support.</li> <li>• Data on tax in areas around light rail stations.</li> <li>• Capital and operating expenses. What's the cost and what are you going to get for the cost?</li> <li>• From human services standpoint – transportation always comes up as a main need.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toll roads-opportunity? Challenge? Distraction?</li> <li>• Rail stakeholders need to be at the table.</li> <li>• More info from other regions. Costs, coordination, lessons.</li> <li>• Ensure any resulting option is flexible but has staying power to allow long term predictability.</li> <li>• Be sure there is support from the ground up.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessons learned from Express Service – needs may have changed.</li> <li>• Takeaways from other investment studies – what's out there?</li> <li>• How do Autonomous Connected Vehicles impact this?</li> <li>• Outer belt (highway) an option? Other road investments and how impacts transit?</li> </ul>

**Question 3: Thinking of the growth-related challenges that we will face, how important is the efficient movement of people to our success? Why?**

*A sample of the unique responses for Question 3 are included below.*

<p><b>Cabarrus County</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges of growth and the importance of efficiently moving people are real issues, but the importance outweighs the challenges.</li> <li>• More efficient movement of people – and goods – can open doors to opportunity. Must move people and goods for positive growth and prosperity.</li> <li>• Generational expectations related to getting around require shift in how we think about transit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gaston County</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit is key in Gaston County for economic development purposes. Continued conversation and coordination about this issue is critical. Efficient movement of people is important.</li> <li>• It is important. Public and customer service is key and critical. Efficiency and educating public on how to use transit system is needed.</li> <li>• Culture change and paradigm shift are needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Iredell County</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The efficient movement of people is the #1 priority. It is about improving quality of life and economics.</li> <li>• Good transportation options are linked to economic development and residential/commercial development. Beware of lost opportunities.</li> <li>• Need further coordination between county and municipalities. Local government working more efficiently to solve problems related to transit.</li> <li>• Focus on bringing people north out of Charlotte. Plan for connectivity east and west is also needed. Moving people within county is critical too.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lincoln County</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit decisions now impact land use decisions now and beyond. Investment in transit will save asphalt investment. Transit is a growth-related opportunity.</li> <li>• Tipping point concept – not near it yet. Movement of people within Lincoln County is more the issue. Residential development in western Lincoln? Open space is valued there. But, must plan for the future.</li> <li>• Jobs and mobility of the workforce. The needs of millennials and seniors – these groups have expectations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>North Mecklenburg County</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All about access to jobs, quality of life, entertainment, etc. What is the most efficient way to get into Charlotte? Need to look more at transit corridors.</li> <li>• Efficient movement is related to transit options, frequency, and a positive riding experience (i.e., wi-fi, clean and comfortable, etc.).</li> <li>• Need to make bus-riding more attractive via messaging and positive experience.</li> <li>• Do not need a roads-only approach. We need to figure out how to get people from home to where they can catch transit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>South Mecklenburg County</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit of getting on train or bus – must sell the idea to get people out of their cars. Message benefits to different age groups/different modes.</li> <li>• This is an economics issues (efficiency and time are money). Productivity is important – if you are in your car driving, you are not working.</li> <li>• Efficiency is very important for combatting congestion.</li> <li>• Amazon HQ2 RFP lists transit options as important. Transit and the movement of people is prioritized.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 3: Thinking of the growth-related challenges that we will face, how important is the efficient movement of people to our success? Why?</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Autonomous Connected Vehicles/disruptive technologies/telecommuting – what will the future look like?</li> </ul>
<b>South Carolina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional competitiveness.</li> <li>People are number one asset. Must attract and retain employees – transportation needs to be efficient, flexible, and predictable.</li> <li>Do not want to become a place where people do not want to come because of traffic.</li> <li>Employment centers become less attractive because of travel time – leap frog development.</li> <li>Quality of life and impact that travel and congestion costs have on quality of life.</li> </ul>
<b>Union County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit needs to be part of growth (with roads) in suburban areas. Efficiency is key.</li> <li>Express buses will not fix congestion issues in and through Union County (and Mecklenburg). We cannot pave our way out of congestion – we need light rail.</li> <li>Traffic is a deterrent to people moving in, from a real estate perspective. Efficient movement matters! Regarding home sales and attracting tax base.</li> <li>Funding is always the issue. Need cost/benefit for transit vs. roads, etc. Cost of doing nothing. Long term vs. short term costs and benefits.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit options are important.</li> <li>Perceptions of commutes/movement matter.</li> <li>Roads are outpaced by growth.</li> <li>Connections are beneficial, attract more people to our region.</li> <li>Intra-county focus needed (e.g., for medical trips)</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobility choice, economic choice, and choice of where to work.</li> <li>Land prices are high in uptown – want choice to live around region.</li> <li>Light rail seems more attractive, more efficient, reliable (bus has more stops and transfers).</li> </ul>

<b>Question 4: How should transit support our region's future prosperity?</b>	
<i>A sample of the unique responses from Question 4 are included below.</i>	
<b>Cabarrus County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need a more proactive approach (see Amazon HQ2 example). Must think ahead and be ready.</li> <li>Everyone needs to contribute and the “what’s in it for me” piece needs to be clear. Work towards shared success among municipalities. Leaders from across jurisdictions need to make a unified statement in favor of regional transit.</li> <li>Poverty exists. Transit is the bridge to livable wage jobs to help people and families get out of poverty. Transit can be part of positive social and cultural impacts.</li> </ul>
<b>Gaston County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit should be part of larger network for multiple reasons – economic development, entertainment, etc.</li> <li>Prosperity-related to growth, but for all people. Affordable options are needed.</li> </ul>



<b>Question 4: How should transit support our region's future prosperity?</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need equitable, bi-state regional focus. "If it is good for here, then it's good for the region." No community is an island.</li> </ul>
<b>Iredell County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting business – many look at transit system as big factor for moving business in. Beware of lost opportunities regarding business.</li> <li>• Great transit system as regional asset. We can all claim and use regional attractions (lakes, parks, trails, shopping).</li> <li>• All about growth, quality of life, tourism – and improving all of the above.</li> </ul>
<b>Lincoln County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCDOT funding structure. People could be more efficiently moved with investment in transit.</li> <li>• Having regional support for transit requires mindset change.</li> <li>• This is a generational issue – transit means different things for different age groups.</li> <li>• Missed opportunities regarding business (re)location. Organizations are looking for options, including mobility. Must attract and retain business and talent.</li> </ul>
<b>North Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on developing transit and economic corridors. Transit as backbone of infrastructure.</li> <li>• Transit system has to work for all and be equitable, and not just into Charlotte, but to other downtowns.</li> <li>• Robust transit options help to retain and attract talent. The full transit experience is important.</li> <li>• Transit needs to make sense: money, time, safety. Transit system also has a land use implication (transit oriented development)/development pattern.</li> </ul>
<b>South Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place-making encroaching on road-widening. Transit oriented development (TOD) needs to be balanced with future growth.</li> <li>• Transit needs to support heavy industry, freight movement, business sector, hospitality sector.</li> <li>• Transit supporting economic development (instead of residential).</li> <li>• Could have transit stations as hub for an urban density development (TOD) including services, home, and work.</li> </ul>
<b>South Carolina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money earned and where the money is spent.</li> <li>• Need integrated funding support for transit – regional, remove federal barriers, state (NC &amp; SC) policy barriers.</li> <li>• Local funding support (1/2 cent).</li> </ul>
<b>Union County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs and quality of life – transportation addresses both.</li> <li>• Influx of people moving into the area – approaching tipping point.</li> <li>• People are interested in walkable communities and neighborhoods that transit supports.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now is the time to interrelate transit plans before conflicts occur.</li> <li>• Cross-jurisdictional coordination can generate greater funds, benefits to many communities.</li> <li>• We need to remember the importance of goods movement and economic development (both of which can be supported by transit).</li> </ul>

<b>Question 4: How should transit support our region's future prosperity?</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The region is valued as a safe place, good weather, etc. How do we keep people moving? How do we provide access to health care for all?</li> </ul>

**Question 5: What role should transit play in your county's future competitiveness?**  
*A sample of the unique responses for Question 5 are included below.*

<b>Cabarrus County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot wait until you need it -- must plan for it and do it. Regional authority driven by vision and policy is needed – take the politics out of it.</li> <li>It is essential for the county area to stay competitive.</li> <li>Be mindful of land use, development, and purchasing rights-of-way. Do not wait to purchase land.</li> </ul>
<b>Gaston County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting and retaining talent – need to be prepared with transit options, (not car dependent).</li> <li>Transit facilities are important. Make them inviting and interesting. Make transit facilities as mixed use, places of interest.</li> </ul>
<b>Iredell County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educating public on what is available related to transit. Making clear the transit and land use connection.</li> <li>The Lake Norman area is already competing with upstate SC and other NC counties in the region. Would transit increase competition within region? Or, would transit be helpful to unify our region to be competitive against other regions?</li> </ul>
<b>Lincoln County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receptiveness to transit options will shape how Lincoln County grows. It is all about people, jobs, and service efficiencies.</li> <li>Ease of accessing transit is important to consider, particularly for seniors. Need well-placed access points to accommodate people's needs. Consider access related to services (i.e., medical visits, etc).</li> <li>Move towards prosperity for all residents.</li> </ul>
<b>North Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit provides choice – for companies to place job center and for people to get around.</li> <li>Lack of choice could mean “choking” from real estate standpoint. People do not want to buy homes north of Charlotte because of traffic to Charlotte.</li> <li>Policy makers need to have long term vision -- maybe spend a little more to get more/better transit options.</li> <li>Mitigating congestion is a greatest challenge. More efficient transit options are the answer. Transit is becoming more of a public conversation.</li> </ul>
<b>South Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you have transit options, you are more competitive (see Amazon HQ2 RFP example).</li> <li>Connect rural areas with business centers where jobs are located.</li> <li>Be proactive, not reactive. Atlanta has suffered because of lack of regional cooperation. It is critical to do this regionally. Problems do not stop and start at county/state lines.</li> </ul>
<b>South Carolina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market accessibility for workers.</li> <li>Access to housing (affordable), job centers and reverse commute.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 5: What role should transit play in your county's future competitiveness?</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private sector and public-sector partnership to identify and develop routes and transportation.</li> <li>• Transit blurs state lines to create a metropolis.</li> </ul>
<b>Union County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always going to be behind in transportation/roads. Because of this lag –desire may be to avoid putting money into transit – something that may not work – so, let's catch up with more roads. It is all about where to allocate funds.</li> <li>• Freight element – transit to serve many people and organizations.</li> <li>• What are the intangible/indirectly related benefits of light rail (e.g., South End and NoDa)? Transit oriented development.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We thrive together (locally and regionally).</li> <li>• Growth can be held up if transportation lags behind.</li> <li>• Transit can support work force housing. A better mix and more choices for housing, reduce transportation costs.</li> </ul>
<b>Make Up Meeting #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel time reliability is very important.</li> <li>• Highway and transit planning behind in this region. We should be proactive instead. Need a shared vision.</li> <li>• Best companies/employers want transit.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 6: Regarding a “regional, system-wide focus,” prioritize the following issues as they apply to your county (with your first choice being the most important).</b>
1. Holistic transportation choices that support economic and social mobility (political boundaries not always applicable for transportation).
2. Cross-county commuting (jobs, culture, entertainment, etc.).
3. Need for existing mobility/transit system coordination.
4. Need to communicate projects having multi-jurisdictional impacts.
5. Better understand models for cross-county collaboration.

<b>Question 7: With respect to what should be identified through the development of a Regional Transit Plan, <u>prioritize</u> the following in terms of importance to your county (with your first choice being the most important).</b>
1. Funding Options, Barriers, and Peer Region Review.
2. Land use and social/economic mobility vision.
3. Current mobility options/systems/assets.
4. Mobility Options and Connections (other than light rail).
5. Transit Destinations, Transit Lines, Transit Mode.
6. Regional Commuter Rail Options.
7. Administrative Structure Options and Peer Region Review.

**Question 8: When thinking of transit supportive messaging for the following audiences, prioritize the following in terms of importance relative to your county:**

1. Employers.
2. Residents with jobs in another jurisdiction.
3. Seniors and others with limited mobility.
4. Residents with limited access to a car.
5. Destination based transit riders (entertainment, leisure, etc.).
6. Non-transit riders.

**Question 9: What will your county/community be able to do because of a Regional Transit Plan that you are not able to do now?**

Cross-regional themes that emerged included:

- Provides unified vision and shared decision making among local governments
  - Provides a “larger voice” for jurisdictions that may not normally be heard
  - More competitive for outside funding
  - Coordination now can save time and money later
  - Supports the reservation of right-of-way that will be needed for transit
- Supports us all being economically competitive
  - Predictability for economic development and business investment decisions
  - Unified message to businesses and residents considering our region or already here

*A sample of the unique responses for Question 9 are noted below.*

<b>Cabarrus County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have predictability related to getting around.</li> <li>• May be eligible for more and/or different funding.</li> <li>• Accessible to people that would normally not have access to transit and opportunity.</li> <li>• Reinforced need for a plan. Must establish right of way early. Establish corridor. Establish and plan amenities.</li> <li>• Change way roads vs. transit are framed. It is about mobility!</li> </ul>
<b>Gaston County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market opportunities for jobs, etc. inside and outside Gaston County.</li> <li>• “Because of the regional transit plan, I can take _____ opportunity.”</li> <li>• Having plan in place may help residents, employers, elected officials rethink transit.</li> <li>• Broaden regional vision. More integrated vision, among jurisdictions and topic areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Iredell County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared decision making among jurisdictions. Understanding and development of a functional transit system.</li> <li>• Right of way protection and coordinating between jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Be able to figure out alignments to get going.</li> <li>• Got to have a plan to apply for federal funds and to understand where and where not to develop.</li> <li>• Community needs to understand who they are and what they want (e.g., bedroom community or not).</li> </ul>



<b>Question 9: What will your county/community be able to do because of a Regional Transit Plan that you are not able to do now?</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning means preparation and holding/protecting land. Staying ahead of the growth curve.</li> </ul>
<b>Lincoln County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building a transit center in Lincoln(ton). Thinking about a hub in Lincoln County. Need a plan for a hub like this. Keep in mind other places that people go for jobs.</li> <li>• Good to have regional vision and plan. It is a start, but reality may be different.</li> </ul>
<b>North Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will have a plan, so that is a good start. Need to implement plan and move towards economic mobility.</li> <li>• Timeline/forecasting.</li> <li>• Plan would need to have items for local governments – performance measures and how CATS will help with that.</li> <li>• Update land use policies to include/consider/align with development and transit.</li> </ul>
<b>South Mecklenburg County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more coordinated approach to moving people, etc.</li> <li>• Plan is first step, then funding, then right of way.</li> <li>• With growth comes traffic and congestion. How do we get people out without cars?</li> <li>• Move people, move infrastructure, move business, move traffic and on and on.</li> <li>• Austin, TX example – if you don't plan, you will have a problem.</li> </ul>
<b>South Carolina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better forecasts of if we can physically grow business-worker access/cost.</li> <li>• Transit right-of-way can dictate and/or impact development growth.</li> <li>• Marketability and attract new businesses.</li> <li>• Shared vision and success with collaboration.</li> <li>• Communication tool-investments/predictability.</li> </ul>
<b>Union County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to attract business and employees.</li> <li>• Better ideas and knowledge of land use planning – ability to use space better.</li> </ul>
<b>Make up Meeting #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate projects with multi-jurisdictional impact(s).</li> <li>• “Local input, local needs.”</li> <li>• Funding.</li> <li>• Focus on messaging – getting to work, etc. especially people and families without access to cars.</li> <li>• Have a voice – access to expertise and better “window to the future” across jurisdictions. Better manage local development.</li> <li>• Economic development with transit forecasted.</li> </ul>
<b>Make up Meeting #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help prioritize transit projects.</li> <li>• Need near-term wins and actionable items to keep momentum going.</li> <li>• Save time and money with plan-coordination.</li> <li>• Will help build coalition for common issues -- Mayors meetings build relationships.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 9: What will your county/community be able to do because of a Regional Transit Plan that you are not able to do now?</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Speaker of the House is from King’s Mountain – build relationships and politically-open communication.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 10: Is there consensus on continuing the regional transit discussion?</b>
<b>YES!</b>

<b>Question 11: Of the following items, prioritize what you want to get out of the Transit Summit (with your first choice being the most important).</b>
Work plan and timeline for next steps.
Additional details on how my county’s needs could be met through a regional transit plan.
Sense for support from federal and state agencies for a regional transit plan.
MPO, NCDOT, SCDOT involvement.
High level, expert presentations.
Announcement of funding partners (potential and secured).

<b>Question 12: Who should definitely be invited/present at the Transit Summit?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private sector representatives/Large employers (e.g., hospitals)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chamber of Commerce representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local, state, and federal elected officials and staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NCDOT board members and staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SCDOT board members and staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NC General Assembly transportation committee/leadership</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal transportation representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognized community and business leaders and influencers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universities/schools/community college representatives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County, city and town managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Millennials/younger generations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>East Lincoln Betterment Association (ELBA)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Money holders"/donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Railroad organization representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HOAs/neighborhood group representatives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planners, community development leaders, economic development leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential riders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing riders</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives from peer regions (e.g., Denver, CO)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>River District stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy groups (e.g., Sustain Charlotte)</li> </ul>

## Public Opinion and Transit Stakeholder Surveys

Centralina COG collaborated with M/A/R/C® Research, Omnicom’s Predictive Analytics Agency, to conduct a public opinion survey among both residents and transit stakeholders to understand attitudes towards future transit and to supplement the engagement meetings conducted by CCOG.

The resident and stakeholder surveys were conducted in the core area of the MTC region, including the following geographic areas:

- NC – Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Lincoln, and Union counties
- SC – Urbanized areas of York and Lancaster counties

Specific objectives for the transit research study are to:

- Gain a better understanding of public awareness, support, and favorability of regional transit;
- Assess project area population’s attitudes and inclination towards transit (all modes) in general.

### Research Methodology:

Residents and stakeholders in the 6-county area in NC (Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Lincoln, and Union Counties) and the urbanized area of York and Lancaster Counties in SC were interviewed via an online survey.

Resident survey respondents were sourced from a M/A/R/C® Research online panel partner, and comprise a representative mix of demographics including age, gender, income, ethnicity, as well as geography (balanced by the CCOG county region). A statistically significant base of 216 total completed resident surveys across the targeted geographic area were collected, and the survey was approximately 20 minutes in length.

In addition to surveying residents, transit stakeholders were invited to take the online survey as well. The content of the resident and stakeholder questionnaires was identical, though stakeholders were asked to respond from that perspective rather than from a resident perspective. A unique stakeholder survey link was provided to the CCOG team, and CCOG staff distributed the link to the appropriate participants. A total of 40 completed stakeholder surveys were collected.

Fielding for the resident survey occurred between October 4 and October 16, 2017, while fielding for the stakeholder survey occurred between October 12 and November 17, 2017.

### Questionnaire Flow/Topics



**Key Takeaways:**

**Opportunity to increase CATS top-of-mind awareness**

- Unaided awareness of CATS ranges from 61% among residents to 67% among stakeholders. While decently strong, given that CATS is the only major public transportation system in the Greater Charlotte area, there is room to improve top-of mind awareness – doing so opens the door to higher levels of usage.
  - When aided, virtually all residents and stakeholders mention CATS (91% and 98%, respectively).

**Opportunity to increase CATS usage, particularly among higher income/socio-economic groups**

- While about one-fourth of Charlotte-area residents on average indicate weekly or daily usage of CATS, which is much higher than the national average of 6% (Source: MRI/Nielsen 2017), more frequent usage among stakeholders – a proxy for higher income groups – is only 3% on average. This signals a potential opportunity to increase usage among higher income/socio-economic groups.

**Opportunity to improve overall resident opinion of mass/public transportation**

- The majority of residents and stakeholders believe mass/public transportation is important (61%, 72%, respectively), and about 70% of residents exhibit positive feelings toward mass/public transportation – however, stakeholder’s positive opinion (proxy for higher income) is 87%, indicating a potential opportunity to improve overall resident opinion.
  - Improving perceptions of convenience (e.g., schedules, routes, etc.) would be a good place to start, as this was the key way that both residents and stakeholders state would help make mass/public transit more appealing.
  - Messaging that focuses on good/quality service, helping the community, good alternative to driving, helping the environment, and reducing congestion are additional topics that would likely help drive an improvement in resident opinion of mass/public transportation.

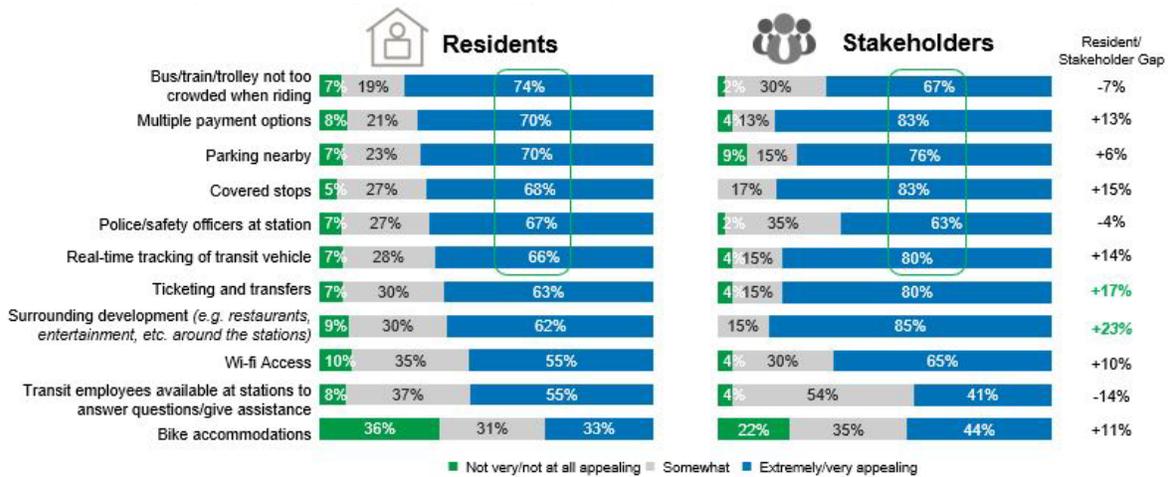


Howto Make Mass/P Public Transportation More Appealing	Residents
<b>Ease/Convenience (Net)</b>	<b>48%</b>
Locations/more convenient locations	18%
More/better coverage/connections/routes/stops	14%
Reliability/on schedule/on time	5%
<b>Price/Value (Net)</b>	<b>9%</b>
Price/reasonable price	5%
<b>Service (Net)</b>	<b>6%</b>
Good/better/quality service	6%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Safety/improve safety	18%
Clean	7%
Nothing	17%

Note: Mentions 5% or greater are reported.

**Residents indicate that a range of usage, convenience, and safety-related transit items are appealing**

- Top transit-related elements residents find appealing include transit vehicles not too crowded, multiple payment options, nearby parking, covered stops, police/safety officers at stations, and real-time tracking of transit vehicles.
  - Stakeholders tend to focus more on development and operations such as the surrounding development (e.g., restaurants, entertainment, etc.), ticketing, and transfers.



**Messaging that focuses on using mass/public transportation for fun-related activities could spur usage**

- Concerts, events, and nights out – e.g., fun-related themes – represent higher likelihood of use among both residents and stakeholders.

**Messaging that focuses on practical topics might also induce additional usage**

- Residents and stakeholders are likely to use an expanded, regional transit service if their vehicle was broken down, if the service was faster/same as driving, if the service provided congestion-free commuting, and reduced costs and worry/concern.

**Majority of residents would likely use a rideshare program for the first/last mile of trip**

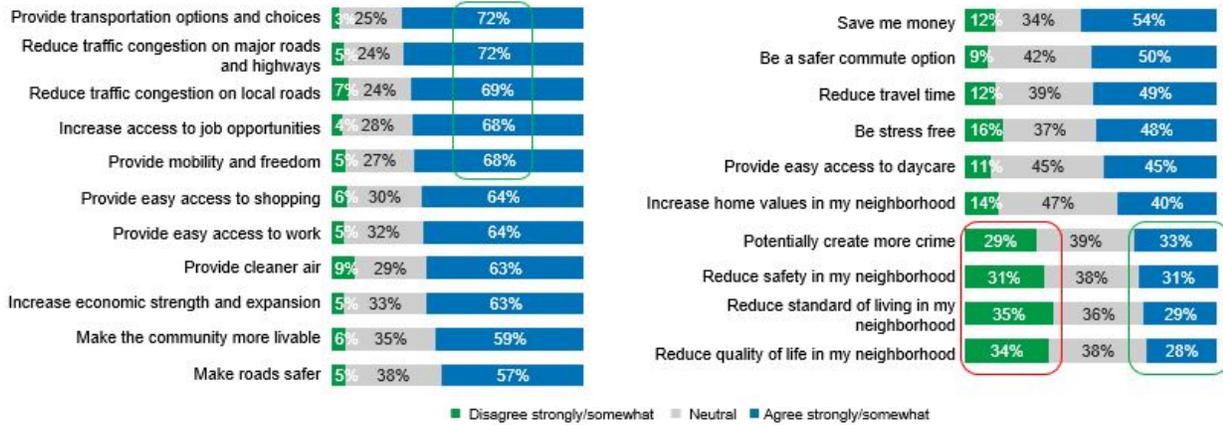
- Roughly two-thirds of residents and stakeholders said they would use a rideshare program that takes them the first/last mile of their trip.
- There would likely be a net increase in overall transit use, as 23% of residents said their use would increase vs. 11% who said would decrease.
  - Similar, but stronger, results among stakeholders – 39% said their use would increase vs. 7% who said decrease.

### Opportunity to better align resident perceptions of mass/public transit and neighborhood impact

- While Charlotte-area residents are in agreement (ranging from 68% to 72%) that an expanded, regional transit service will provide transportation options/choices, reduce traffic congestion, increase access to job opportunities, and provide mobility/freedom, residents are divided on the idea that an expanded, regional transit service would be detrimental to their neighborhoods – this suggests a positioning opportunity to better align resident perceptions.

### Residents

#### Expanded, Regional Transit Service



### Rail options are much more likely to be used as a mode of transportation vs. busses and street cars for both local (<25 miles from home) and non-local (25+ miles from home) destinations

- Rail (light and commuter) is much more of an appealing option for both residents and stakeholders compared to busses and street cars for local and non-location destinations.

#### Local Transit Situation <25 miles



Light Rail



Commuter Rail

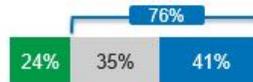
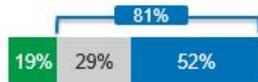


Street Car

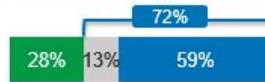
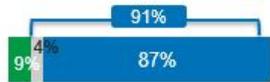


City Bus

#### Residents



#### Stakeholders



Legend: Not very/not at all likely (Green), Somewhat (Grey), Extremely/very likely (Blue)

**There is an opportunity to strengthen mass/public transportation perceptions and usage among non-Mecklenburg County residents – Mecklenburg County residents place much higher importance on, and agree more strongly with, a wide array of transit-related elements vs. those outside Mecklenburg County**

- Those living in Mecklenburg County vs. those living outside Mecklenburg County:
  - Place higher importance on the overall availability of mass/public transit (48% and 23%, respectively).
  - Exhibit higher ratings on the importance of reducing traffic congestion (77%, 66%), reducing vehicle emissions (67%, 54%), and the type of transit vehicle (63%, 50%).
  - Are more likely to indicate that a range of elements prevent them from using mass/public transit, including worried about safety (64%, 25%), trips take too long (43%, 11%), having to transfer (43%, 13%), uncertainty of schedule (43%, 17%), schedule not frequent enough (41%, 3%), and frequent delays (20%, 2%).
  - More strongly agree that a wide range of attributes related to an expanded, regional transit service would:
    - Provide transportation options (83%, 72%), reduce traffic congestion (81%, 68%), provide mobility and freedom (79%, 65%), increase access to jobs (79%, 66%), increase economic strength (75%, 62%), make community more livable (73%, 57%), save me money (65%, 48%), be stress free (59%, 40%), and increase home values (54%, 37%).

## What's Next

---

Continuous coordination is extremely important in our bi-state, multi-MPO region to ensure our collective success. The Regional Transit Engagement Series set out to accomplish several near and long-term objectives, including: informing the CATS 2030 plan update and any future regional transit planning, aiding in local planning efforts, and informing future Metropolitan Transportation Plans and the region's economic development strategy.

Engagement feedback to date has indicated a strong desire for immediate development of a regional transit plan that has both a regional, system-wide focus while honoring the needs of individual counties. A goal of this work is to create a regional transit framework that fosters a long-term shared vision for multi-county transit and provides near-term strategies for addressing current mobility needs in a coordinated fashion.

Early identified topics for continued discussion and a potential Regional Transit Plan include:

- Enhancing local and regional mobility options and connections.
- Regional collaboration opportunities around trip planning, fare payment, and integrated service
- Human Transportation Services coordination and planning
- Veteran transportation and cross-jurisdictional medical transportation
- Transit destinations, rapid transit lines, and transit modes
- Regional commuter rail options
- Intentional engagement of local, state, and federal elected officials and staff to ensure identification of key policy issues important to the region
- Funding options, barriers, and best practices from peer regions
- Administrative structure options and peer region successes

To learn more about this project, upcoming engagement activities and opportunities related to transit, and to see this and other Regional Transit Engagement Series reports and appendices, access the RTES webpage by clicking here: <http://bit.ly/RegionalTransit>.

**Project Management Team contacts:**

John Muth  
Deputy Director, CATS  
[jmuth@charlottenc.gov](mailto:jmuth@charlottenc.gov)

Jason Lawrence  
Transportation Planner, CATS  
[jlawrence@charlottenc.gov](mailto:jlawrence@charlottenc.gov)

Michelle Nance  
Planning Director, Centralina COG  
[mnance@centralina.org](mailto:mnance@centralina.org)

Jason Wager  
Planning Program Supervisor, Centralina COG  
[jwager@centralina.org](mailto:jwager@centralina.org)