

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Regional Transit Engagement Series?

As one of the fastest growing regions in the country, there is recognition that long-term transit planning efforts should be accelerated if we are to remain a leading, competitive region nationally and globally. In fact, **transportation choice** emerged as a top growth priority from the three-year, 14-county, bi-state planning process known as *CONNECT Our Future*. As a component of transportation choice, communities of all sizes, urban to rural, were eager to talk about regional transit in terms of transportation, economic access and mobility, economic development, and place making.

The Regional Transit Public Engagement Series is a continuation of this dialogue; an opportunity to have a focused conversation about regional transit, well before any planning takes place. This is an opportunity for communities to express their aspirations, concerns, values, and interests around long-term transit.

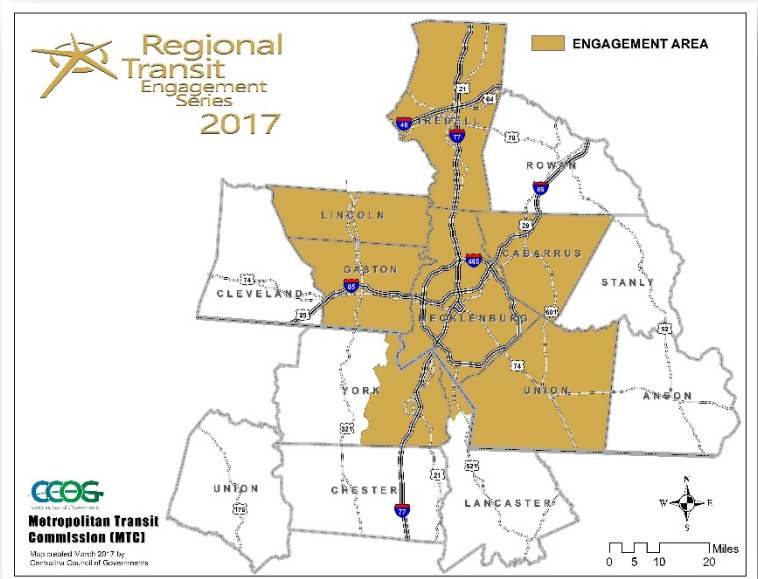
Who is Involved and When?

The project area includes Mecklenburg County and the North Carolina counties immediately adjacent to Mecklenburg. In South Carolina, the project area includes the urbanized portions of both Lancaster and York counties (the area within the Rock Hill/Fort Mill Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization’s boundaries).

Forums will be held in each participating county to gather input on regional transit needs, values, concerns, and aspirations. Initial meetings will take place in the spring of 2017, and will include municipal and county managers, transit directors, transportation planners, and planning directors.

During the summer and early fall, a second set of county meetings will include local, state, and federal elected officials, economic development organizations, private sector interests, institutional leaders (hospitals, colleges, etc.), and key state and federal government staff. In addition, a public survey will invite residents to provide their thoughts on the future of transit in their community.

In the fall, we will highlight findings and consensus based next steps during a regional transit summit.



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Why Now?

Demographers, developers, and real estate officials at the national and state levels agree: **our region's population will continue to grow—and we must provide the infrastructure, mobility, jobs, businesses, and services to match.** Forecasters anticipate 4.24 million people will call the greater Charlotte region home by 2050—an increase of 74% from 2010. Nearly doubling population in the region between 2000 and 2050 could significantly increase the consumption of farmland and open space, spread out our population and the area where services and infrastructure must be provided, producing an array of undesired consequences: expensive utility expansion, increased traffic congestion with longer commutes to work, overcrowded schools, loss of working farms and degradation of environmental resources.

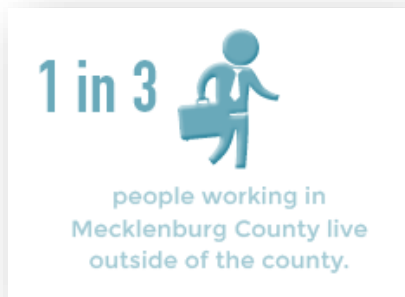
All of these factors work together to degrade our national and global economic competitiveness. With these facts in mind, Transportation Choice was the 2nd highest mentioned “community or regional challenge” identified by residents during the CONNECT Our Future project. Specifically, coordinating transportation issues, including freight planning and transit readiness, was listed as the top infrastructure priority.

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Why Transportation Choice?

Residents across the region have indicated that transportation choices are important to their quality of life, wallets, and health.

- Over 50% of the region’s workforce lives in one county and works in another. Transportation choice allows residents housing and lifestyle choices.
- According to the Locational Affordability Index developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), median income families in communities throughout the greater Charlotte region spend as much as 41% of their annual income on transportation costs.



- A development pattern that is conducive to walking and biking also promotes daily physical activity, provides vibrant activity centers, and allows for future transit service.
- Access to alternative forms of transportation, including transit, can improve air quality by reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled.

By thinking through regional transit topics now and soliciting feedback from residents, we’ll be able to harness the best the future has to offer, while still preserving all of the things that make our existing communities great.

“...allowing for different transportation provides me with options to choose to live where I want to so I can still have access to rural living if I so choose.”

-CONNECT Participant

How Does This Relate to Other Projects?

While there are multiple regional initiatives and plans that address transportation, economic development, and growth, there seems to be alignment on several key issues with consistent goals that focus on:

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- Economic growth and competitiveness,
- Developing region-wide systems and transportation infrastructure, and
- Transportation choice, multi-modal options, and the importance of mobility.

The following plans and initiatives address growth, transportation infrastructure, and economic development.

- CONNECT Our Future is a 14-county, bi-state regional planning process that developed regionwide growth priorities. Priorities included transportation and housing choice, economic growth, and walkable centers connected by regional transit.
- The four Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the Charlotte region are in the process of developing their 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPs) focused on multi-modal transportation infrastructure, including transit.
- The Greater Charlotte Region Freight Mobility Plan addresses transportation infrastructure and policy improvements needed to increase efficiency of freight movement.
- The Charlotte Area Transit System's (CATS) 2030 System Plan outlines future transit corridors and modes and will be influenced by results of the engagement series. CATS current planning initiatives include:
 - Blue Line Extension construction (Charlotte to UNC Charlotte)
 - Silver Line light rail planning (Charlotte to Matthews/Union County)
 - Gold Line Streetcar construction (Charlotte to West Charlotte)
 - Red Line corridor planning (Charlotte to Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson and Iredell County)
 - Airport Corridor light rail planning (Charlotte to Airport and Gaston County)
 - Envision My Ride initiative to study current bus routes and frequency.
- The Charlotte Regional Partnership, the Charlotte Chamber, and the Centralina Economic Development Department coordinate on the development of regional economic development strategies that include goals for transporting the workforce within and through the region.

How Will Results Be Used?

The results of the transit engagement will inform the CATS 2030 plan update and any future regional transit planning, can aid in local planning efforts, and can inform future Metropolitan Transportation Plans and the region's economic development strategy.

Input received during the regional transit engagement series will be used to determine important next steps for our region.

- Are there near-term coordination efforts that would improve transportation efficiency between transit systems?
- Are there strategies that would support mobility for seniors, veterans, and persons with disabilities?
- Is there interest in planning for regional transit across county lines?
- Are there communities that are ready to develop transit oriented activity centers for economic development purposes?
- Are there counties that would like to participate in a regional transit planning initiative?

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How Can I Find Out More?

This process provides an opportunity to ask questions and become more informed about transit opportunities. Your feedback will be used to determine consensus based next steps for the region.

A project webpage has been created to keep you up to date on regional meetings, provide resource materials, and other opportunities to be involved, including a public survey. Go to www.centralina.org/TBD.

If you would like to request a presentation for your organization or group, contact Jason Wager at Centralina Council of Government at JWager@centralina.org or Jason Lawrence at Charlotte Area Transit System at JLawrence@ci.charlotte.nc.us.

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