



# CONNECT Beyond

A Regional Mobility Initiative

## Focus: Gaston County



### CONNECT Beyond Overview

CONNECT Beyond is a bold regional mobility plan that will transform how residents and visitors travel throughout our 12-county region. The CONNECT Beyond Mobility Moves are the building blocks for creating a network that will enhance economic competitiveness, improve access, and create transit ready places.

### Why is this important?

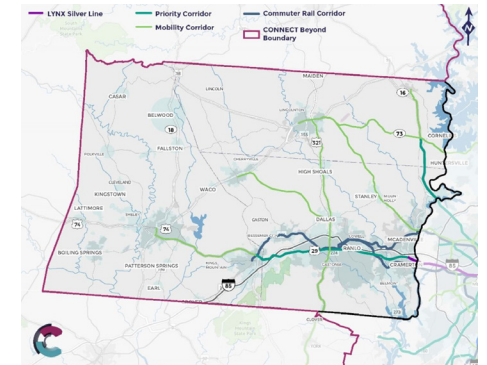
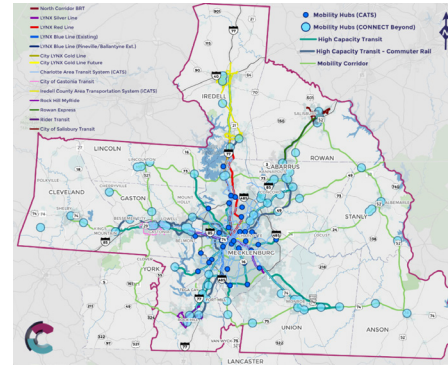
We've been clear throughout the planning process about the tremendous benefits of having a regional vision for mobility, but we'd like to highlight how this benefits your county as we move into the adoption and endorsement process.

### Why this Project is Important to Gaston County

- **Congested Roadways:** Growth impacts on roadway networks are significant and our community recognizes the need for additional options.
- **Downtowns:** Mobility investments help transform downtowns and better meet the needs of businesses and residents.
- **Access to Jobs & Education:** Transportation choices improve quality of life for people who reside in one county but work or seek education in another.
- **Employers:** A highly functioning transportation network with a range of mobility options will appeal to new and existing employers.
- **Freight Mobility:** Key industries in Gaston County depend on reduced traffic congestion for swift movement of raw materials and final products. Expanding mobility options will mean fewer people on the roads and more capacity for freight mobility.
- **Rural Access:** An interconnected transportation network helps people access shopping, restaurants, school, and other activities in surrounding areas.
- **Bus Network:** The CONNECT Beyond region has multiple transit agencies providing local and regional bus services. This makes public transit more complicated, as each provider has different route frequencies, fare systems, prices and websites.
- **Equity:** Very real economic and social inequalities exist in the region. Focusing on expanding transportation choices, improving accessibility, and increasing affordable housing can help to enhance equity in meaningful and impactful ways.
- **Preparation for High Capacity Transit:** High capacity transit (HCT) includes light rail, bus rapid transit, express buses, commuter rail, and streetcars. Investing and focusing growth within HCT corridors will provide the greatest mobility benefits and return on investments.

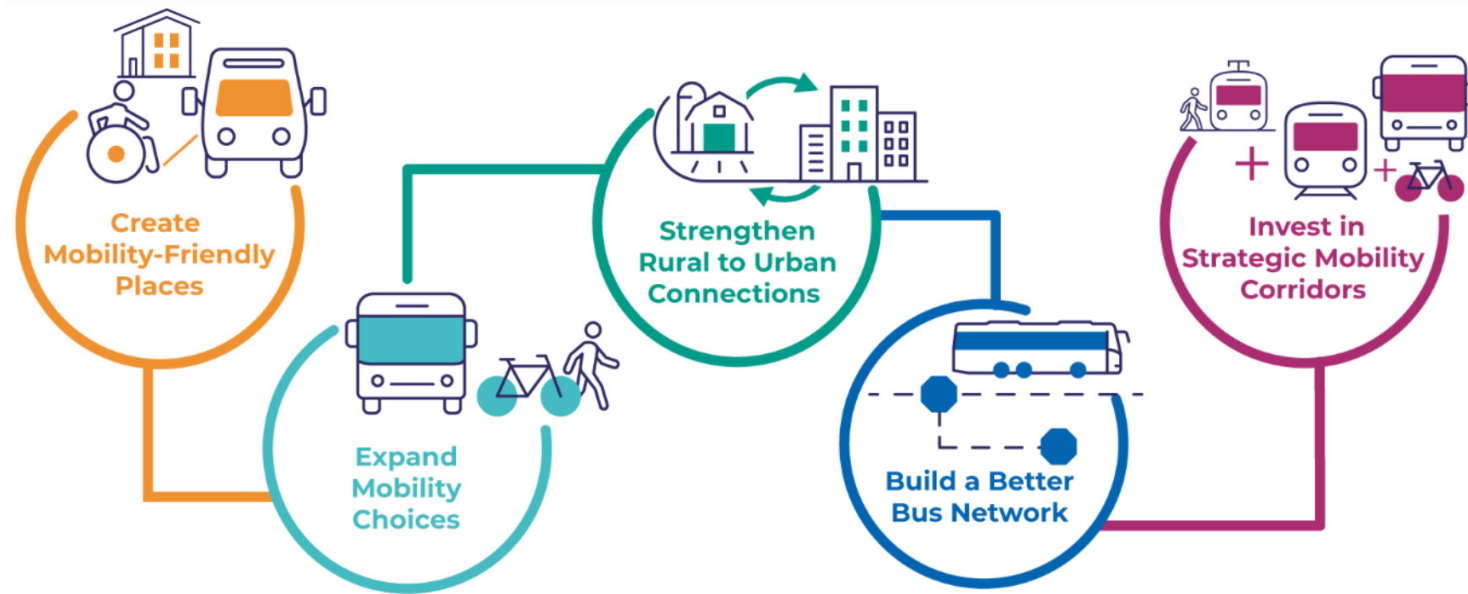
### Why this Project is Important to Individuals in Gaston County

- Providing more access and opportunity for everyone.
- Making it easier for riders to figure out how, when, and where to use transportation options to get to jobs, school, medical appointments, etc.
- Creating places that are easier to walk, bike and take public transit where you want to go.



## How can CONNECT Beyond help address these issues?

| 5 Mobility Moves   | What this means for Gaston County   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Create Mobility-Friendly Places:</b><br/> <i>Strategies to support vibrant, pedestrian-friendly communities that have convenient access to public transit services.</i></p>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt recommendations identified in TOD study to help prepare for the Silver Line; seek to replicate in other communities</li> <li>• Transit Supportive Development strategies need to be incorporated into community codes</li> <li>• Incorporate transit review into development review process</li> <li>• Continue participation in CommunityViz</li> <li>• Add Transit to Technical Review Committees</li> <li>• Focus growth along Wilkinson Blvd. (HCT) and along other mobility corridors</li> </ul>                      |
| <p><b>Expand Mobility Choices:</b><br/> <i>Strategies to support how, when and where residents and visitors travel, now and in the future.</i></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support work for coordinated website that shows riders all transit services available</li> <li>• Participate in commuter programs for residents who travel for education/jobs, especially for Tech park and Gaston Community College</li> <li>• Explore vanpool options for cross-county trips</li> <li>• Encourage mobility hub investment by supporting development of 12 mobility hubs identified in CONNECT Beyond Plan</li> <li>• Explore adopting policies to ready curbside management for future technologies</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Strengthen Rural to Urban Connections:</b><br/> <i>Strategies to improve mobility and transportation choices for those who choose to live and work in suburban/rural communities.</i></p>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued participation in Mobility Managers Group</li> <li>• Explore on-demand options for non-medical trips – Help Gaston Access provide trips to grocery store or to visit friends or seek private sector options for these trips</li> <li>• Support efforts to develop coordinated regional scheduling for cross-county trips</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Build a Better Bus Network:</b><br/> <i>Strategies to make it easier for riders to plan, pay for and complete their trips.</i></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore increasing frequency of express services between Charlotte and Gaston communities</li> <li>• Implement hybrid on-demand and fixed route system to better serve needs of residents</li> <li>• Ensure maximization of federal funding opportunities – take the 80/20 funds</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to increase connectivity with FUSE District</li> <li>• Participate in regional REMIX license and planning</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Invest in Strategic Mobility Corridors:</b><br/> <i>Strategies to identifies candidate corridors where high-capacity transit lines could be located and where focused transit investments should occur</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support feasibility analyses of transit options for HCT corridors (actual mode and economic impact of each)</li> <li>• Support and coordinate with commuter rail communities</li> <li>• Support improved and additional crossings over the Catawba to facilitate future transit modes (rail or BRT)</li> </ul>   |



## Moving CONNECT Beyond forward

### Maintaining our Momentum

- Regional Coordination: To create a region of mobility-friendly communities interconnected by a total mobility network, we must work together. We must build on existing positive collaborations while developing confidence and trust in shared responsibilities. Regional partners will work together to move recommendations forward as capital projects, strategic initiatives or operational improvements.
- Transportation Funding: In order for this regional mobility plan to be implemented, developing clear cost estimates and finding funding sources will be essential. Together we have more power to secure resources for the region. The Plan helps ensure no one is left behind and that all jurisdictions can proceed forward on their own timeline.

### What can Gaston County do now to advance the CONNECT Beyond Recommendations?

- Your Centralina Delegate should vote to adopt/endorse the CONNECT Beyond Plan on October 13th.
- Support the Metropolitan Transit Commission endorsement of the plan (October 2021) through a resolution, letter, email, or conversation with your local representative.
- Support GCLMPO's endorsement of CONNECT Beyond recommendations in relevant documents by coordinating with technical coordinating committee and policy board representatives.
- Determine local priorities for CONNECT Beyond implementation.
- Ensure County coordination with MPO on funding needs for upcoming mobility projects.
- Support regional coordination efforts through staffing and funding.
- Advise CONNECT Beyond staff on how implementation can be best designed to meet local needs.