

Advancing the Plan Committee Report

FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL MOBILITY GOVERNANCE

Executive Summary

The Board Chair of Centralina Regional Council established an official ad-hoc advisory committee of its Executive Board to steward regional conversation and action that advances the implementation of the **CONNECT Beyond Regional Mobility Plan** within the greater Charlotte region. The Advancing the Plan (ATP) Committee was formed to ensure that interests from across the region are heard, provide a forum for communication across jurisdictional lines and serve as the test ground for collective action on regional mobility projects.



The CONNECT Beyond ATP Committee convened elected officials, city and county managers and members of the business community throughout 2023 and early 2024 with the goal of shaping **recommendations for a regional mobility governance approach**.

What is CONNECT Beyond? CONNECT Beyond is a bold regional transit vision and plan that provides real mobility solutions and opportunities for residents and visitors across the two states and 12 counties that make up the greater Charlotte region. The plan was adopted by its lead sponsors, Centralina Regional Council and Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and all North Carolina transportation planning organizations in the region. Project efforts now are focused on implementing the plan's 120+ recommendations.



CENTRALINA
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Models for Regional Collaboration

The greater Charlotte region has a complex system of transportation and transit planning, investment and operations, creating an opportunity for regional collaboration. Based on a review of peer agencies, the Committee defined two alternative model organization frameworks for regional collaboration:

- **Model 1 (Recommended):** Regional Coordination with Independent Operations – entity’s regional coordination is focused on rider experience and planning activities
- **Model 2:** Fully Integrated System and Operations – entity additionally oversees transit operations and infrastructure

Through engagement exercises and discussions, **the Committee recommended that the Charlotte region should start with a model for regional (multi-county) collaboration that reflects Model 1**, while also leaving open the possibility for a more fully integrated entity in the future.



Recommendations for Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Authorization Legislation

In 2024, the ATP Committee determined that new legislation, designed to accommodate the needs and goals of the region, would be necessary to form a regional transit authority (RTA). The Committee found consensus on the following recommendations for possible RTA authorization legislation:

Recommendation for Legislation	Committee Rationale
Eligible RTA Geography: 10-county CONNECT Beyond area, including: Anson, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union counties	The Committee agreed that all the counties in North Carolina that were part of the Connect Beyond effort would be eligible to be part of the RTA. A bi-state authority was not recommended due to its complexity. Additionally, any adjacent county should be given a legislative pathway to joining the RTA, if desired.
Purpose and Services Provided: Inclusive of Model 1 and Model 2 activities	The Committee reached consensus that a new RTA in the Connect Beyond region should begin by focusing on regional coordination (Model 1), while maintaining a clear path to becoming a fully integrated RTA (Model 2) without having to return to the North Carolina General Assembly for additional legislative action.
Purpose and Services Provided: Include a no takeover clause	The Committee supported a stipulation that prohibits the RTA from taking over the operation of another transit provider without that provider’s consent.
Funding: Local governments should be able to access a variety of revenue streams to join RTA	The Committee supported creating flexibility for localities in joining the RTA. Local governments should be able to join the RTA at a time of their choosing, and have a choice for the type of revenue stream (e.g. sales tax, vehicle registration tax, vehicle rental tax) they use to fund transit investments.
Board Composition and Membership - Formation: At least four entities, inclusive of two counties	At least four entities, including two counties with voting seats, would be required for RTA formation. Include a pathway for entities to opt-in and opt-out after formation.
Board Composition and Membership: Board membership (voting) for paying entities only	The Committee had a strong preference that entities with seats on the RTA Board also contribute money to the RTA in exchange for voting rights. The committee also recognized that county involvement is crucial due to their role in providing human services transportation and could potentially hold nonvoting seats on the Board.

Other Board Composition and Membership Considerations:

- **Board size** that ranges from 15 to 30 members.
- **Appointees & Expertise:** Appointees to the Board should represent both public and private sector perspectives, including:
 - **Regional and State Perspectives:** Board seats potentially reserved for transportation planning organizations and North Carolina Department of Transportation.
 - **Fixed Route Systems:** There was also interest in some of the seats on the Board being reserved for entities that operated fixed route transit services.
 - **Small Communities:** Recognizing that there are dozens of smaller communities across the region, the Committee saw a need to allow for a variety of communities to sit on Board, either as a primary or alternate member.



ADVANCING THE PLAN COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Co-Chairs Mayor Darrell Hinnant (City of Kannapolis) and Mayor Vi Lyles (City of Charlotte)

2024 Committee Members: Mayor Karen Alexander (City of Salisbury); Commissioner Leigh Altman (Mecklenburg County); Joe Bost (Charlotte Regional Business Alliance); County Manager Dena Diorio (Mecklenburg County); County Manager Mike Downs (Cabarrus County); County Manager Kim Eagle (Gaston County); Councilmember Tommy Green (Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO); Commissioner Bob Hovis (Gaston County); City Manager Marcus Jones (City of Charlotte); Mayor Rusty Knox (Metropolitan Transit Commission); Tony Lathrop (NC Board of Transportation); County Manager Andy Lucas (Stanly County); Pat Mumford (Gaston Business Association); City Manager Lloyd Payne (City of Concord); Commissioner Lisa Qualls (Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization); David Rhew (NC Public Transportation Association); Commissioner Lynne Shue (Cabarrus County); Councilmember Jennifer Stepp (City of Gastonia); Mayor Woody Washam (Metropolitan Transit Commission); Commissioner Jarvis Woodburn (Anson County)

Past Committee Members:

Former Mayor Melinda Bales (Metropolitan Transit Commission); Janet LaBar (formerly with Charlotte Regional Business Alliance); Former Mayor Scott Neisler (Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO); Former Mayor Ron Pappas (Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization)

Acknowledgement

We appreciate the support and input received from our consultants at HDR Engineering for the development of the Committee's recommendations and report.

For more information about the Advancing the Plan Committee and to read the full report, visit: www.centralina.org/advancing-the-plan

