Transit Expansion Advocacy

A regional, interconnected mass transit system will give citizens, especially commuters, ways to reach their destination without the use of a single-occupancy vehicle.

Path Forward Priority: Now (2019-2022)

Status: In-progress

Accomplishments to Date:

- 2018: Charlotte Gateway Station, a multimodal transit hub, breaks ground for construction.
- 2019: Charlotte City Council approved a $50 million contract to begin preliminary design of the 26-mile Silver Line light rail expansion project, which will extend from Matthews, NC to Belmont, NC.
- 2020: Centralina Regional Council, in partnership with the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) launched Connect Beyond, a two-state, 12-county mobility initiative to define a single, coordinated transit vision for the region.
- 2020: I-77 North Corridor Bus Rapid Transit from Iredell County to Charlotte begins service.
- 2021: City LYNX Gold Line Phase 2 Expansion nears completion.
- 2021: CATs conduct public meetings for review and comment on the LYNX Silver Line Project recommended Locally Preferred Alternative plan.
- 2021: Mecklenburg County Air Quality (MCAQ) staff and Air Quality Commissioner briefed Mecklenburg County’s MTC representative, Commissioner Leigh Altman, on the Air Quality benefits of transit expansion.
- 2021: MCAQ prompted CATS to apply for $850K in Federal Transit Administration grant funding for Areas of Persistent Poverty within Mecklenburg County. If approved, the project would establish Mobility Hubs and On Demand transit service programs in the City of Charlotte’s West Side, specifically West Boulevard and Freedom Drive.
2021: Centralina Regional Council, in partnership with the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) completed the Connect Beyond Regional Mobility Plan, which will guide and coordinate mobility investments for the next two decades. MCAQ reviewed the draft CONNECT Beyond plan and provide input through stakeholder process.

Next Steps:

- Support implementation of the CONNECT Beyond Regional Mobility Plan.
- Advocate for CATS and City of Charlotte transit expansion plan(s) to emphasize affordable housing and anti-displacement action items in support of racial equity.
  - Incorporate affordable housing and anti-displacement into staff-to-staff discussions.
  - Review required equity impact analysis and provide comments to staff.
  - Follow UDO-TOD development/implementation and provide input in staff-to-staff discussions.
- Provide Air Quality analysis support, as needed.

Stakeholders: Mecklenburg County Air Quality (MCAQ), Metropolitan Transit Commission; Charlotte Area Transit System; Centralina Regional Council; Charlotte City Council; Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners; Charlotte Regional Transportation & Planning Organization; Regional Transit Commissions/Providers/Elected Officials

Funding Opportunity: Federal Transit Administration – Capital Investment Grants, North Carolina Transportation Improvement Program

Staff Contact: Sheldon Turner, Sheldon.Turner@MeckNC.gov, 980-314-3362
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Next Steps:

- Evaluate the racial equity impacts of this strategy.
- Brief Mecklenburg County’s MTC representative, Commissioner Leigh Altman, on the Air Quality benefits of transit expansion.
- Provide Air Quality analysis support, as needed.
Stakeholders: Metropolitan Transit Commission; Charlotte Area Transit System; Centralina Council of Governments; Charlotte City Council; Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners; Charlotte Regional Transportation & Planning Organization; Regional Transit Commissions/Providers/Elected Officials

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Transit Expansion

Existing Efforts:

- In November 2006, the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), Charlotte Area Transit System’s (CATS) policy board, adopted the 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan, which consists of multiple rapid transit improvements. Progress made thus far include: LYNX Blue Line light rail service in 2007; City LYNX Gold line streetcar service in 2015; LYNX Blue Line extension in 2018; and Bus Rapid Transit along Interstate 77 Corridor in 2019. Future plans include: City LYNX Gold Line expansion, LYNX Silver Line, and LYNX Red Line.

- In April 2017, the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG), in partnership with the MTC, held a Regional Transit Engagement Series (RTES) to gather input from local government staff, elected officials, private sector representatives, and institutional leaders to better understand transit opportunities and needs for the region. In May 2018, a Regional Transit Summit was held to highlight the RTES’s findings and consensus-based next steps, which included a shared vision for a regional transit plan and implementation strategies.

- In September 2019, the CCOG in partnership with the MTC, issued a request for qualifications seeking Consultant Services for the development of a Regional Transit Plan and Implementation Strategies for the 12-county Charlotte region (Anson, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, Union, Lancaster and York). The study will begin by end-of-year 2019.

- In November 2019, the Charlotte City Council approved a $50 million contract with the engineering firm, WSP USA, to begin preliminary design and environmental work on the 26-mile Silver Line light rail expansion project. The line will extend from Matthews, NC to Belmont, NC.

Stakeholders: Metropolitan Transit Commission; Charlotte Area Transit System; Centralina Council of Governments; Charlotte City Council; Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners; Charlotte Regional Transportation & Planning Organization; Regional Transit Commissions/Providers/Elected Officials
Funding Opportunity: Federal Transit Administration – Capital Investment Grants, North Carolina Transportation Improvement Program

Next Steps:

- Participate in CATS regional transit stakeholder group when convened.
- Brief Mecklenburg County’s MTC representative, Commissioner Susan Harden, on the air quality benefits of transit expansion.
- Meet with other transit providers from the 7-county Charlotte region, as applicable.
- Provide CATS/regional transit providers with Air Quality analysis of operational and/or system changes, upon request.

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The Idea: Transit Expansion

- A regional, interconnected mass transit system will give citizens, especially commuters, ways to reach their destination without the use of a single-occupancy vehicle.

The Action:

- Support efforts to develop an interconnected mass transit system throughout the Charlotte Region
- Quantify the air quality benefits of Mass Transit as an alternative to driving.

The Pollution Source: 23% of NOx comes from passenger vehicles\(^1\)

The Cost-effectiveness: Unknown

The Factors:

- Transit only reduces pollution if commuters use the service.
- Transit can mitigate traffic congestion on main commuter routes.
- Some services (light rail and streetcar) are powered by electricity, not gas or diesel.
- Particulate Matter – Low co-benefits
- Greenhouse Gases – Medium co-benefits

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\(^1\) 19.37 tons/day of NOx. Passenger vehicles includes both passenger cars and trucks. Source: Revised Maintenance Plan For The Charlotte-Gastonia-Salisbury, North Carolina 2008 8-Hour Ozone Marginal Nonattainment Area (July 2018)