

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

June 17, 2013

MEMO TO: J. Russell Allen, City Manager

FROM: Mike Kennon, PE, Transportation Operations Manager
Eric Lamb, PE, Transportation Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Budget Note 44 – Transit Circulators

The following budget note was requested at the Raleigh City Council Budget work session on June 10, 2013.

The term “transit circulator” is used to describe several types of transit services, each with its own unique operational goals and characteristics. It is traditionally used to describe a service that links major trip generators to another mode of transit. The circulator service usually performs the critical link of the beginning or ending of a passenger trip. The headways are typically less than 15 minutes and serve fairly short routes. Circulators are often used to compliment major rail stops where dense developments with multiple trip generators exist. They can also serve major transit hubs; for example, the R-Line in Downtown Raleigh serves Capital Area Transit’s main transit hub at Moore Square Station. The Wake County Transit plan also describes circulators as local routes that serve as connectors to other transit services; these may be future light rail connections, park and ride lots, or major transit hubs. The R-Line in Downtown Raleigh and the Wake Forest Loop are examples of two existing circulator routes in operation today. As described above, these services link major trip generators with existing local, regional or express transit services.

The Wake County Transit Plan does not specifically include circulators for existing activity centers with retail and growing mixed use environments; however, the plan does try to ensure that existing areas with major trip origins and destinations are served with high frequency routes. These high frequency routes provide corridor based services which provide convenient connectivity to the full transit network within the City. The long overdue development of a corridor based service serving Six Forks Road included in the Wake County Transit Plan is a prime example of this effort. The plan did not recommend activity centered circulator services as an initial priority but they will become viable services in the future, especially when rail stations and corresponding high density land uses are realized. The plan is a “living” document and it will undoubtedly require additions and revisions as conditions change. Revisions to this plan will require final approval from the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The plan is fiscally constrained so any service changes will require additional revenue or removal of other recommended services within the impacted jurisdiction in order to maintain a budget neutral revision.

Several locations within the City of Raleigh have been suggested to receive “branded” circulator services; they include but are not limited to North Hills, Cameron Village, and Crabtree Valley Mall. These centers are located along the key transit corridors that are slated for major transit improvements in the Wake County Transit Plan in the form of new and increased transit frequency. As the base transit network improves these activity centers will become viable locations for new circulator routes in future years.

Major transit corridor investments, as defined by the Federal Transit Administration, (New Starts/Small Starts) are required to have a unique identity in order to designate the high level of investment and corresponding service. Circulator services could also utilize a similar unique identity in order to compliment activity centers and the communities they serve. While a unique identity can be used for individual services, many communities identify service types with a special designation or brand. For example, express routes may have a different paint scheme than local routes or circulators. This form of branding can help a transit patron easily distinguish between varying types of transit service with distinct characteristics.

A new transit service to North Hills Mall was outlined in an earlier memo dated January 22, 2013; this memo has been included for convenience. The route described is not a circulator but could be developed into a corridor based service serving key trip generators such as Downtown Raleigh, Duke Raleigh Hospital, and North Hills. It is envisioned that this service would travel Person Street, Atlantic Avenue, Wake Forest Road, Whitaker Mill Road, St. Albans Drive to North Hills. This routing is only a preliminary design; however, it does capture the major trip generators defined. As stated in the memo, the annual operating cost for this service with 30 minute headways and an R-Line span of service is estimated to cost \$625,000 annually. If 15 minute headways are introduced the annual cost would be \$1.25 Million annually.

The Raleigh Transit Authority has prioritized the development of high quality transit service on the City's radial routes by way of the Short Range Transit Plan. The most efficient and productive way of doing this is lowering of headways in existing corridors with strong ridership. If the Council desires to move ahead with a circulator concept; they would need to explicitly direct the Authority to revise the short-range to implement the circulator services instead of increasing service along the key corridors. Before a decision like this is made, staff believes it would be helpful to conduct a peer city review of circulator services in similar communities. This review would include headways, route length, ridership, branding, fare, and how these services are integrated into the regular transit system. It is believed this review can be completed by City staff in approximately 90 days. This will give the Council and Transit Authority options for consideration before revising the existing plan.

The continued vetting of the CAT Short Range Transit Plan and the Wake County Transit Plan should continue. Conditions and priorities are constantly changing and the transit plans/services provided should reflect these new conditions and priorities. Transit and Transportation Planning staffs are committed to providing support to new initiatives while balancing the needs of existing services in need of improvement. The entire Wake County Transit plan can be found at <http://www.wakegov.com/planning/transport/pages/transitplan.aspx>.



City of Raleigh North Carolina

January 22, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mike Kennon, Manager, Transportation Operations

FROM: David Eatman, Transit

SUBJECT: Midtown Transit Services / Wake County Transit Plan

Wake County Transit Plan

Staff has reviewed the proposed services to Midtown in the Wake County Transit Plan. The plan calls for a series of radial route improvements through Midtown on Six Forks Road, Falls of Neuse Road, and Atlantic Avenue. The plan also develops a crosstown connection through the Midtown area stretching from WakeMed to Crabtree Valley Mall. It is anticipated that the services programmed within the Wake County Transit Plan will be implemented within 5 years once funding is secured with a successful ½ cent sales tax referendum. The services defined within the Wake County Transit Plan serving the Midtown area include:

Falls of Neuse Road to Duke Medical and WakeMed North: This local route will travel Wake Forest Road and Falls of Neuse Road. Major trip generators served include Downtown Raleigh, Duke Raleigh Hospital, and WakeMed North. This route is scheduled to operate seven (7) days per week with Weekday Headways at 30 Minutes all day.

Programmed Annual Cost: \$1,619,000

Six Forks / North Hills to Strickland: This local route provides service along Six Forks Road from Downtown Raleigh to Six Forks Station. This route is scheduled to operate seven (7) days per week with Weekday Peak Headways at 30 Minutes. Peak Headways are defined as service provided between the hours of 6:00AM - 9:00AM and 3:00PM - 6:00PM.

Programmed Annual Cost: \$999,000

WakeMed to Crabtree Valley Mall: This new local crosstown service will link WakeMed and Crabtree Valley Mall. Major trip generators served will include WakeMed, Highwoods, Duke Raleigh Hospital, North Hills, and Crabtree Valley Mall. This route is scheduled to operate seven (7) days per week with Weekday Peak Headways at 30 Minutes.

Programmed Annual Cost: \$828,000

NC State via Atlantic Avenue to WakeMed North: This local route is programmed to provide service from NC State University to Cameron Village and then along Atlantic Avenue to WakeMed North. This route is scheduled to operate Monday - Saturday with Weekday Peak Headways at 30 Minutes.

Programmed Annual Cost: \$750,000

It is estimated that over \$4.1 Million in bus service will be directed to trip generators within the Midtown area in the first five (5) years of the Wake County Transit Plan. The Wake County Transit Plan recognizes the planned densities, mixed uses, and the role of transit within this quickly developing area of Raleigh just north of I-440.

Branded Transit Service

The continued growth in mixed use development and the push for improved transit access and pedestrian amenities in the Midtown area has resulted in discussions of creating a branded transit service for Midtown. It is envisioned that such a service would operate much like the existing R-Line in Downtown Raleigh. While internal circulation is important to Midtown; it is anticipated that the greatest opportunity for ridership exists for a quality service that would link major trip generators such as Downtown Raleigh, Duke Raleigh Hospital and North Hills. A quality service could link the Convention Center with additional entertainment venues and provide a direct link to existing hotel room capacity in North Hills. The service would also serve two existing strong transit ridership areas, Wake Forest Road and the North Hills area, much of which is still under development.

While such a service is not directly outlined in the Wake County Transit Plan, the importance of the Midtown area is detailed throughout the report. A route serving Duke Raleigh Hospital and the North Hills development area could provide 30 minute headways with the same investment currently required to operate the R-Line. The fully allocated budget for the R-Line in FY2013 is \$625,000. A community based approach to passenger amenities could also be adopted. The use of a special passenger shelter design and corresponding amenities could be designed to aid Midtown's efforts to create strong streetscapes along key corridors.

Funding and Implementation

The Wake County Transit Plan assumes that the revenue from a ½ cent sales tax and from increased vehicle registration fees will be used to fund the plan. The branded transit service described is not currently included; however, this service could be added to the existing financial model as an amendment. Improved sales tax projections and the savings gained from similar planned services could be directed to a branded service while maintaining a financially constrained plan. The construction of passenger amenities, which are not funded in the initial phase of the Wake Transit Plan in the Midtown area, could be funded with a combination of public and private funding. As with all services, community and stakeholder input would be needed to finalize routing, span of service, and branding opportunities.