



# Transportation Policy Priorities FOR THE TRIANGLE METRO REGION

## KEYS TO A MOBILE FUTURE

Transportation is big, but it is always part of something bigger: economic development opportunities, healthy, active neighborhoods, greater access to jobs and education. The Triangle Metro Region – urban, suburban and rural -- was home to 35% of the state’s growth from 2010-2020, and is expected to add another million people over the next generation. A transportation policy that enables North Carolina to continue to compete effectively must focus on 3 key areas:



Economic Development  
& the Attraction of  
Diverse Talent



Healthy, Complete  
Communities Equitable  
for All Residents



Safety for All  
Travelers, From  
Youth to Seniors

## REGIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES

Seven key priorities can result in fast-growing regions staying ahead of the growth curve, rural areas and small towns taking advantage of economic opportunities and every community providing complete streets and safe solutions tailored to local conditions.

### INVEST FOR SUCCESS

- ➔ Create dedicated, recurring state funding as a match for competitive federal funds, such as the BUILD, passenger rail, and Capital Investment Grant (CIG) programs.
- ➔ Create state economic development funding for multi-modal investments serving job hubs in small towns, rural areas, and along major metro mobility corridors.

The BuildNC bond was a good start, but fast, flexible funding is needed for multimodal projects not well suited to the long and constrained STI process. Regions will do their part - they need a handshake, not a handout from the state - a committed partner to match regional action with state action.

*- Minnesota's Transportation Economic Development Program could be a model for a nimble, economic-based effort -*



### MAKE INVESTMENTS RELIABLE AND PREDICTABLE

- ➔ Remove constraints and account for multimodal benefits for rail transit funding.

The STI program allocates funding in a reasonable way, with one exception: rail transit. Rail transit should be held to the same standards as other investments, and its measurable multi-modal benefits should be included. Constraints on state funding should be removed so that projects can compete on a level playing field and funded on their merits. Businesses tell us that risks, uncertainties, and changing rules stifle success - transportation investment is a key business for the state and its communities.

*- \$1 million invested in transit generates 4,200 job-hours; \$1 million in roadway investment generates 2,400 job-hours -*



# ENABLE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE CRITICAL CORRIDOR INVESTMENTS

- ➔ Relax the cap on statewide tier funding within a corridor.

While the reasoning behind a cap is sound, its application leads to piece-meal spending which costs more in the long run and affects travelers throughout the state. The cap can also prevent investments on parallel reliever roadways that could be cost-effective and complimentary investments.



*- 30% of vehicles on the Triangle's busiest stretch of I-40 - which is hampered by the corridor cap - is from areas outside Wake and Durham counties -*

## REMOVE FUNDING BARRIERS FOR SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS IN DIVISIONS WITH LARGE MPOS

- ➔ Exempt Surface Transportation Block Grant-Direct Allocation Funding from the STI Allocation.

These funds are allocated from the federal government to MPOs to address mobility challenges in urban areas. Exempting these funds from the STI formula at the Division Tier would allow funding to be more evenly distributed and let small towns and rural counties better compete for funds.



*- NC's STI program already exempts 8 other categories of transportation revenues -*

## MAKE NC A LEADER IN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS

- ➔ Surpass peer states in funding economically beneficial and safety-focused bicycle & pedestrian projects.

Whether its a critical link in NCDOT's Great Trails State Plan, an important sidewalk connection to make travel to school safer, or a Main Street bike and pedestrian project to serve businesses, state funding provides crucial leverage for federal funds and local contributions.



*- 16% of crash fatalities are pedestrian or cyclists; the state is a necessary partner in solutions -*

## STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR DEMAND-MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY

- ➔ Stabilize and grow NCDOT's investment in Transportation Demand Management (TDM) to match local and regional commitments. Implement the Regional Technology (ITS) plan for roadways and transit.

The most cost-effective dollar spent efficiently manages the demand for the supply of roads we already have. Working with employers on ways to offer workers alternatives to peak-hour, drive-alone commuting and deploying technologies to maximize the roadway supply are key elements of smart cities.



*- The Triangle TDM program has reduced vehicle miles traveled by over 300 million miles over the past 5 years -*

## RECOGNIZE STATEWIDE PROJECTS IN OTHER MODES, NOT SOLELY ROADWAYS AND FREIGHT RAIL

- ➔ Establish standards and scoring criteria for designated statewide passenger rail and trail investments.

Just as highways serve statewide interests, so do other modes. Charlotte to Raleigh passenger rail serves 5 NCDOT divisions and 3 NCDOT regions. Great trails traverse the state - the East Coast Greenway stretches from VA to SC and the Mountains-to-Sea Trail runs 1,175 miles from the Great Smokey Mountains to the Outer Banks.



*-Raleigh to Charlotte passenger rail contributes \$60 million to business output and \$30 million to GSP annually-*





# Invest for Success



## A Triangle Metro Region Transportation Priority

*Create dedicated, recurrent state transportation funding as a match for competitive federal funds, together with state economic development funding for key multi-modal investments serving job hubs.*

The BuildNC bond was a good start, but fast, flexible funding is needed for multi-modal projects not well suited to the long and constrained STI process. Regions will do their part -- they need a handshake, not a handout from the state -- a committed state partner to match regional action with state action.



- State funding for shovel-ready and shovel-worthy projects may drive any federal stimulus funding decisions -

Opportunity comes to those who are prepared for it. North Carolina needs special transportation funds that move at the speed of business and are fast and flexible enough to dovetail with changing federal transportation funding opportunities and business expansion decisions:

- NC has a history as a "donor" state when it comes to competitive grants, especially for major transit capital investments
- Recent major economic development location decisions, such as for the Amazon HQ2, have emphasized the importance of investing in quality transit to attract jobs

## Dedicated State Funding to Match Competitive Federal Funds

**What success looks like:** A ready-to-go pool of state matching funds that local and state applicants for competitive federal grants can count on to increase their chances for success.

### Recent Success

North Carolina awarded \$47.5 million CRISI grant to purchase freight line for future passenger service

The 10-mile line is called the "missing link" for future high-performance passenger rail service between Raleigh, N.C., and Richmond, Va.

Author — Mischa Wanek-Libman

Sep 21st, 2020



### Key Policy Considerations

- Understanding federal scoring systems and tailoring projects for maximum success
- Ensuring sufficient levels of funding to provide matches, while being able to pivot funding if applicants are not successful
- Nurturing relationships with federal agencies and local partners to ensure our ability to deliver projects on time & on budget

### Project Types that Might Benefit

- BRT and passenger rail projects through the Federal Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program
- Roadway, transit and bike-ped projects seeking BUILD funding
- Projects eligible for any infrastructure stimulus legislation that may occur

# Economic Development Funding for Mobility Investments in Key Hubs

**What success looks like:** A state economic development fund that can quickly respond to mobility needs of major economic development projects

## Examples from Successful Regions



## Key Policy Considerations

- Understanding how federal programs like Opportunity Zones and FTA Joint Development could leverage economic development and serve key travel markets
- Determining the best source(s) for revenues and the best way to allocate funds to worthy projects
- Building partnerships between transportation staffs and economic development staffs

## Types of Projects that Might Benefit

- Major expansions or relocations that prioritize fast and reliable transit
- Mega-site industrial employers that expect good freight rail and highway access
- Projects eligible for any infrastructure stimulus legislation that may occur

## Next Steps for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- Work with NCDOT, NC Department of Commerce, Economic Development Partnership of NC and State legislators on legislative proposals
- Work with NCDOT and regional partners to build expertise in federal grant opportunities and scoring mechanisms, and identify eligible projects
- Work with partners to conduct feasibility studies to move top projects into shovel-ready or shovel-worthy status
- Build and nurture relationships with federal agencies that oversee competitive grant funding
- Understand typical mobility-related "asks" of major economic development projects
- Understand the region's "mega sites" and the mobility investments that could serve them better

## How to Invest for Success in Your Community

- Fund the planning and feasibility studies needed to make projects shovel-ready and shovel-worthy
- Consider a transportation bond to provide local matching funds to leverage federal funds
- Work with businesses and anchor institutions to develop collaborative partnerships and solutions
- Revise land use, parking & affordable housing policies to align with multi-modal corridor standards





# Make NC a Leader in Active Transportation Investments



## A Triangle Metro Region Transportation Priority

**Surpass peer states in funding economically beneficial and safety-focused bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs**

Whether it's a critical link in NCDOT's Great Trails State Plan, an important sidewalk connection to make travel safer, or a Main Street bike and pedestrian project to serve businesses, state funding provides crucial leverage for federal funds and local contributions.



*- 16% of crash fatalities are either pedestrians or cyclists -*

North Carolina and the Triangle Metro Region should prioritize active transportation investments that support healthy and safe communities. Primary focus areas are:

- Improved implementation of **Complete Streets** projects and **Active Routes to School, Parks, and Transit** approaches that have demonstrated health, equity, and academic performance benefits.

## Complete Streets

**What success looks like:** NCDOT Complete Streets policy implementation is based on the land use and travel characteristics of corridors, along with the needs of users, not on the type of facility that is built or the community it is in. NCDOT, MPOs, RPOs, and local communities seamlessly blend federal, state and local funds to achieve results.

### A Successful Complete Street



### Key State Actions

- Restore state funding for independent active transportation projects to put all modes on a level playing field.
- Make facility maintenance easier. Lower the local match requirements to incentivize more investments. Leverage all funding programs, including safety, for active transportation. Develop best practices for tracking success in active transportation.

### Triangle Projects That Could Benefit

- NC 98 Corridor
- Triangle Bikeway
- NCDOT Great Trails State routes

## Active and Safe Routes to Schools, Parks and Transit

**What success looks like:** Communities partner with NCDOT, MPOs, schools and transit agencies to expand the reach of the Active Routes to School program to link neighborhoods to parks, transit routes, existing schools and planned schools.

### A Successful Active School **Key Policy Considerations**



- Physical activity has a proven positive impact on learning and health
- Schools that participate see improvements in academic performance as well as classroom behavior
- Working together, NCDOT and MPOs can use flexible funding for active routes to schools, parks and transit
- "A 'Vision Zero' approach can lead to safety funding proportional to biking and walking fatalities

## Next Steps for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- Assign MPO staff to work with NCDOT to track complete streets implementation progress.
- Work with NCDOT to develop modified procedures and standards that can make the design, funding, and maintenance of complete street elements easier to accomplish.
- Maintain the current emphasis on active and safe routes to schools, but expand the focus to parks, transit stops, job hubs, and grocery stores.
- Work with legislators to restore state funds for stand-alone bicycle/pedestrian projects.
- Give priority to projects with active transportation elements in existing funding programs.
- Work with NCDOT staff to allocate maintenance funds for state roads transferred to municipal responsibility.

## How to Support Active Transportation Investment in Your Community

- School staff and PTAs organize 'walking and cycling school bus' efforts.
- Staff and advisory boards give input at early stages of school siting and design processes, and design criteria for schools support walking and biking access.
- Active transportation investments and strategies are infused in all local land use, transportation, parks and school planning efforts, focusing on equitable investments to connect neighborhoods to key hubs and services.





# Strengthen Support for Demand Management & Technology



## A Triangle Metro Region Transportation Priority

***Stabilize and grow state investment in Transportation Demand Management (TDM) to match local and regional commitments. Implement the Regional Technology (ITS) Plan for roadways and transit.***

The most cost-effective dollar spent is on efficiently managing the demand for the supply of roads we already have. Working with employers on ways to offer workers alternatives to peak-hour, drive-alone commuting and deploying technologies to maximize the roadway supply are key elements of the smart city movement.



- The Triangle TDM program has reduced vehicle miles traveled by over 300 million miles over the past 5 years -

The Triangle Metro Region is already a leader in the state in deploying emerging technologies and demand management solutions that optimize roadway and transit capital projects. Two key focus areas should be:

- Taking the already successful Regional Transportation Demand Management Partnership to the next level.
- A three-pronged approach to Smart Cities Technology Applications that optimizes how we travel and paves the way for automated, connected vehicles.

## Regional Transportation Demand Management Partnership

**What success looks like:** NCDOT, the Triangle Metro's MPOs and key partners collaborate to recruit, recognize and reward employers and communities that implement different tiers of Transportation Demand Management practices.

### Employer Success



### Key Ingredients

- A regional collaboration between NCDOT, both MPOs and Triangle J COG with 14 competitively-selected service providers.
- Employer-focused with emphasis on anchor institutions, city centers and the RTP
- Coordinated outreach, including virtual webinars on telecommuting during COVID.

### Success Metrics (FY19)

- 6.5 million vehicle trips avoided
- 70 million commute miles reduced
- 2.9 million gallons of gas saved
- 58 million pounds of carbon dioxide release prevented
- 32 designated Best Workplaces for Commuters

# Smart City Technologies

**What success looks like:** Technology applications that overcome uncertainty and take evidence-based steps to better manage freeways, local streets and travel in our region's hubs.

## Active Freeway Management

- Melds communications, controls and optimization strategies
- Reduces delay and increases reliability
- Provides as much as an additional lane of freeway capacity
- More cost-effective than traditional road projects
- Can be used with managed lanes and toll facilities

## Traffic Signal Systems

- Integrated, community-wide network for maximum benefit
- Linked to a traffic management center
- Efficient congestion management and faster incident response
- Key element for connected & automated vehicle infrastructure

## Mobility in Regional Hubs

- City centers and anchor institutions are key destinations
- Combination of technology, pricing and parking strategies
- People-friendly, rather than vehicle-oriented, actions
- Apply lessons learned from Durham's Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge Grant to other key job hubs.



## Next Steps for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- Work with NCDOT to use federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding on eligible TDM and technology projects.
- Work with NCDOT and other partners to transform the Best Workplaces program into a tiered "best in class" statewide recognition program for employers and communities with TDM programs.
- Lead the implementation of the new Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) plan by forming a work group and prioritizing actions.
- Work with state officials to reinstate the ability of local communities to adopt TDM ordinances in places where criteria for travel alternatives can be met.
- Include equity concerns in TDM funding decisions and program monitoring.

## How to Support TDM and Technology in Your Community

- Engage large employers, including local government, to implement TDM practices.
- Seek opportunities to deploy emerging technologies.
- Participate in the new Regional ITS Deployment Plan Working Group.
- Work with NCDOT and MPOs on signal system and active freeway management opportunities.

