



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 or healthy, active neighborhoods or greater access to jobs and education. The Triangle Metro Region – urban, suburban and rural -- was home to 37% of the state’s growth from 2010-17, 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 Accessible to 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

- ➔ Enable critical transportation infrastructure across all modes to be addressed sooner with a statewide transportation bond.
- ➔ Create a new funding source for multi-modal mobility investments tied to economic development projects in small towns, rural areas, and along major corridors in metro regions.

The BuildNC bond is a good start, but it needs to support major multi-modal investments, not just highways. While the bond would let us invest faster, it does not increase total investment; it lets us spend tomorrow's revenue today. The state needs an economic development-focused revenue source for investments that are not well suited to the long and constrained process of the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) program.



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



MAKE INVESTMENTS RELIABLE AND PREDICTABLE

- ➔ Remove caps and constraints on rail transit funding

The STI program distributes state and federal transportation dollars in a reasonable way with one exception: the caps and constraints on rail transit. Rail transit should be held to the same standards as other investments. Caps on state allocations and handcuffs on receiving state funding should be removed so that projects can compete on a level playing field and be 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 CRITICAL CORRIDOR INVESTMENTS TO BE MORE COST EFFECTIVE

→ Relax the cap on statewide tier funding within a corridor.

While the reasoning behind a cap is sound, its application can lead to inefficient, 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.

- 31% of vehicles on the Triangle's busiest stretch of I-40 - which is hampered by the corridor cap - are 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 additional mobility challenges of congested 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.

- STI already exempts 8 other categories of transportation revenues -

MAKE NC A LEADER IN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS

→ Reinstate funds for economically beneficial and safety-focused bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Whether its a critical link to attract tourism on the East Coast Greenway, 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 AND TECHNOLOGY

→ Grow the state's investment in Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and technology applications such as ramp-metering and managed motorways.

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 nearly 280 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 major highways serve statewide interests, so do other modes. Passenger rail from Charlotte to Raleigh serves 5 NCDOT divisions and 3 NCDOT regions. Great trails also 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.

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





Make NC a Leader in Active Transportation Investments



A Triangle Metro Region Transportation Priority

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North Carolina and the Triangle Metro Region should prioritize active transportation investments that support healthy and safe communities. Two initial focus areas can be:

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

Complete Streets

What success looks like: NCDOT, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and local communities engage in continual collaboration to improve the NCDOT Complete Streets Policy and its application to specific projects. The type of facility provided - accompanied by consistent funding and a seamless approach to maintenance - should be based on the characteristics of the corridor and the mobility needs of the users, rather than the type of facility and the municipality or county jurisdiction it is within.

Regional Example: The NC 98 CORRIDOR STUDY

This joint planning effort between NCDOT, and the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro and Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organizations looked at the future of the NC 98 corridor from Franklin County to the City of Durham. The study identified a great need for safe bicycle and pedestrian connections as part of a solution to increasing traffic in the corridor. Incorporating bicycle and pedestrian accommodations into the corridor was one of the top themes from public engagement. The study recommended a side path throughout the corridor with grade-separated crossing, and high traffic and major conflict points along with a 4-lane median divided roadway to serve future needs. The result would be the northern multi-modal backbone of the transportation network in the Research Triangle region.

Active Routes to School

What success looks like: School systems and local communities – with support from the MPOs and NCDOT – continue to expand the reach of the Active Routes to School (AR2S) program, both at existing schools and in the earliest stages of planning for new schools.

The Regional Setting

What began as the Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program and became the Active Routes to School (AR2S) program has been a success story in NC. Overall physical activity has a positive impact on learning and health. North Carolina schools that participate in the AR2S program see improvement in attendance, reductions in tardiness, and improvements in academic performance as well as classroom behavior. Directly mandated funding for SR2S/AR2S has been replaced with more flexible funding sources but decisions about how those funding sources get used still includes AR2S.

Next Steps for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- Track the progress of complete streets implementation on state and municipal road projects, including cost and design details.
- Work with NCDOT to propose modified procedures and standards that can make the design, funding, and maintenance of complete street elements easier to accomplish.
- Prioritize implementation of active transportation projects through existing programs, and focus recommendations for these projects when developing plans and studies.

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{Final list to be based on discussions and feedback at Joint MPO Policy Boards meeting, and follow-up with MPO technical committees.}

How to Support Active Transportation Investment in Your Community

- Municipal staff work with local school principals and PTAs on "walking school bus" efforts.
- Work with the School System to ensure school siting and design include features that make walking and cycling to campuses safe and inviting.

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Strengthen Support for Demand Management & Technology



A Triangle Metro Region Transportation Priority

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The Triangle Metro Region can be a leader for the state in deploying emerging technologies and demand management solutions that optimize roadway and transit capital projects. Two initial focus areas can be

- Taking the already successful **Regional Transportation Demand Management Partnership** to the next level and
- A three-pronged approach to **Technology Infusion** 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 other regions collaborate to recruit, recognize and reward employers and communities that implement Transportation Demand Management practices.

Regional-Scale Program, Regional-Scale Results

By combining resources and using a joint oversight committee to select service providers through a competitive annual process, the NCDOT and the two MPOs provide guidance and support to a dozen service providers who work with communities, employers and commuters to reduce the amount of single-occupant vehicles commuting during rush hours throughout the region. The effort resulted in 5.7 million vehicle trips avoided, 63 million commute miles reduced and 2.6 million gallons of gas saved between July 2017 and June 2018.

Technology Infusion

What success looks like: A future-directed approach that doesn't let uncertainty keep us from taking evidence-based actions to better manage freeways, local streets and activity center travel.

Active Freeway Management (AFM)

A solution that melds communications systems, control systems, and optimization strategies that can significantly reduce delay and increase reliability, AFM systems provide as much as an additional lane of freeway capacity more cost effectively than traditional road projects. AFM can be used in conjunction with managed lanes and toll facilities.

Community Traffic Signal Systems

The full benefit of traffic signals is achieved by an integrated network within a community, linked to a traffic management center. Successful applications offer more efficient congestion management and faster response to and clearance of incidents. Systems can be a key element of future automated and connected vehicle enabling infrastructure.

Activity Center Mobility

Much of our travel is linked to major activity centers (e.g. town centers, anchor institutions). A smart combination of information technology, pricing policies and travel choices can keep campuses, town centers and other activity centers people-friendly rather than vehicle-oriented. The recent Bloomberg Mayors Challenge grant to Durham can be an early demonstration about how to proceed.

Next Steps for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations

- Work with NCDOT to utilize unspent federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding on eligible TDM and technology projects.
- Work with NCDOT and other MPOs to create a tiered "best in class" statewide recognition program for employers and communities that institute TDM programs.
- Strengthen relationships with non-traditional partners involved in technology development and deployment that can benefit the region.
- 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.

{Final list to be based on discussions and feedback at Joint MPO Policy Boards meeting, and follow-up with MPO technical committees}

How to Support TDM and Technology in Your Community

- Engage large employers, including local government, on the merits of implementing a TDM program.
- Seek opportunities to establish or participate in pilot or demonstration programs for emerging technologies.
- Work with NCDOT and the MPO on signal system and active freeway management opportunities.

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