



Connecting all points of the Triangle

MEMORANDUM

TO: Durham Transit Plan Governing Bodies
FROM: GoTriangle Capital Development
DATE: April 19, 2021
SUBJECT: New Regional Transit Center FY22 Work Program Request

Action Requested

GoTriangle requests that Durham Transit Plan governing bodies approve a material change to the transit plan to include a FY22 work program request of \$600,000 and a total FY22-24 request of \$2,850,000 to support design, land acquisition, and construction of a new Regional Transit Center. This request is necessary at this time to demonstrate commitment of local funding as a part of applications for competitive discretionary federal grants for transit facilities. This request is for 20% of the local match and 10% of the total estimated project cost of \$28.5 million.

Background and Purpose

The GoTriangle Strategic Plan and the county transit plans for Wake, Durham, and Orange counties identify the need for the relocation of the Regional Transit Center to improve route efficiency, connect to planned capital investments, and improve passenger amenities. The county transit plans funded a feasibility study to identify relocation and improvement opportunities for the Regional Transit Center. GoTriangle completed this study in early 2021 and is continuing pre-development planning activities including the identification of federal funding sources and preparation of environmental documents. Local support and committed funding is an essential component of applications for discretionary grants for transit facilities.

Existing Conditions

The Regional Transit Center serves as a hub and park-and-ride for ten bus routes that directly serve Raleigh, Durham, Research Triangle Park, Chapel Hill, Cary, Apex, Morrisville, and RDU Airport. Nearly 1,000 passengers board a bus at the Regional Transit Center each weekday, pre-COVID. The center additionally serves as a hub for RTP Connect mobility-on-demand service that provides transit riders last mile connections to various destinations in and around RTP.

The Regional Transit Center opened on Slater Road in December of 2008, intended to be a temporary facility to support demolition and redevelopment of Park Center at the time. As GoTriangle grew service, supported by the county transit plans, and ridership over the intervening years, the increased usage of the Regional Transit Center has highlighted its limitations. Onsite, buses mix with other traffic, creating conflict points with other buses, vehicles picking up or dropping off passengers, drivers accessing the park-and-ride and adjacent

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properties, and pedestrians. Overhead high-voltage electrical lines prevent the installation of improved passenger amenities such as more substantial overhead canopies to protect riders from the elements. The current site lacks a signalized entrance and buses experience significant delays entering and exiting the Regional Transit Center driveway as well as delay at nearby intersections in route to the highway network during peak periods. Relocation to a new location is necessary to address the onsite and offsite limitations of the current Regional Transit Center.

Relocation Strategy

Over the past year, the consultant and GoTriangle staff have completed an existing conditions assessment, identified site operational and location criteria, conducted public and stakeholder engagement, performed a site search, and evaluated six candidate sites in detail and selected three final sites to study further and develop a conceptual facility program. The study has yielded a relocation strategy, to be considered by the GoTriangle Board on April 28, 2021:

- Preferred location: Intersection of NC 54 and the NCRB railroad tracks. This location is intended to facilitate convenient first- and last- mile transit connections between the bus network, planned BRT, Triangle Bikeway and Greater Triangle Commuter Rail projects.
- Conceptual Program: Transit center with covered platform for fixed-route buses, separate covered platform for para-transit and microtransit, enhanced passenger amenities, park-and-ride spaces, and a footprint for a future development adjacent to the site which could accommodate GoTriangle administrative space, among other uses.
- Implementation approach: Initiate design and implementation activities. Commit local share of design, land acquisition, and construction costs in the FY22 county transit plan annual workplans.

FY22 Work Program and Material Change Request

GoTriangle requests the inclusion of committed funding for design, land acquisition, and construction of a relocated regional transit center in the FY22 Durham County Transit Plan Annual Work Program. This includes a FY22 request of \$600,000 and a total FY22-24 request of \$2,850,000. This work program request is in keeping with the guidelines outlined in the “FY22 workplan development memo” shared by the MPO Transit Plan Manager. Notably, this request is consistent with the transit plan update as full funding is asserted in all three scenarios, it will aid in securing a competitive federal grant for 50% of the cost, and it will enable timely implementation of improvements identified in prior planning efforts. Further, the proposed local cost share includes 80% from other sources, limiting Durham’s contribution to 10% of the total project cost (20% of the local match). For these reasons, GoTriangle believes this submittal is justified and unique in its request for the inclusion of a material change to the transit plan as a part of FY22 work program.

The Durham Transit Plan update includes full funding for the Regional Transit Center project asserted in all three draft scenarios. The project is consistent with public engagement to date both from previous planning efforts and the Durham Transit Plan update. Specifically, it supports improved local and regional connections, faster service, improved access to good paying jobs, and it supports connections to existing microtransit in RTP as well as potential expansions of microtransit, paratransit, and crosstown service as a part of the transit plan.

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Since the project is asserted in all three draft scenarios and consistent with public engagement, committing funding in the FY22 work program is in keeping with the goal of “FY22 workplan development memo,” prepared by the Transit Plan Manager, of ensuring maximum influence of the public engagement efforts and new plan on future programming.

Committing \$2,850,000 for design, land acquisition, and construction in the FY22 work program will support the competitiveness of federal grant applications for the Regional Transit Center project. GoTriangle anticipates that this project will be eligible for upcoming FFY21 cycles for discretionary, competitive federal grants including RAISE and 5339 Fleet and Facilities, in addition to any programs stemming from a potential Infrastructure bill. Obtaining a federal grant will halve Durham Transit Plan’s cost share of the facility from \$5,700,000 to \$2,850,000 freeing up transit plan resources to support other priorities identified in the Durham Transit Plan update. Securing commitment of local funds in the FY22 work program is essential to providing a competitive edge in over-subscribed discretionary federal grant programs.

Although funding for the design, land acquisition, and construction of the Regional Transit Center was not identified in previous transit plans, the project itself is included in the GoTriangle and GoDurham short range plans, in addition to the Wake County Transit Plan and the GoTriangle Strategic Plan. The project has also received transit plan funding for its first phase, a feasibility study, which is now largely complete. The Regional Transit Center project is necessary to support the timely implementation and efficient continuation of services identified in adopted short range transit plans. The relocation will reduce travel times and operating costs of Durham and Orange transit plan-supported services while not significantly impacting travel times or operating costs of Wake-supported services, increasing the accessibility of educational and training opportunities and good paying jobs in RTP to Durham residents. The FY22 work program request is a continuation of an existing transit plan project, as opposed to a new project not previously identified or funded by the Durham County Transit plan, making it distinct from other potential material change requests.

For these reasons, GoTriangle believes this request is in keeping with the guidelines outlined in the FY22 work program development memo and that \$2,850,000 should be committed in FY22-24 as a part of the FY22 work program adoption. Further, GoTriangle proposes to limit Durham’s contribution to no more than 20% of the local cost share, with the remaining 80% coming from sources other than the Durham County Transit Plan. The recommended draft FY22 Wake Transit Work Plan includes a commitment of 70% of the local cost share. The project would not proceed until 100% of the local cost share has been identified, including the proposed 10% local cost share from the Orange County Transit Plan.

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