

Wake-Durham Commuter Rail Transit Major Investment Study
Project Sponsor Justification
November 19, 2018

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to identify the appropriate Project Sponsor(s) for the proposed Wake-Durham Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) project. Based on the regional context, oversight and management capacity required to successfully implement and manage a major capital transit investment like CRT, the professional recommendation of the Wake-Durham CRT Major Transit Investment consultant team is that GoTriangle serve as the Project Sponsor for the commuter rail corridor.

DURHAM AND WAKE TRANSIT PLAN

The Durham Board of County Commissioners supported a transit referendum for the county, which included a half-cent sales tax to support transit initiatives. Durham County voters approved it in 2011 in conjunction with the adoption that year of the county's Bus and Rail Investment Plan. In 2017, the Durham Board of County Commissioners, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Transportation Organization (DCHC MPO), and GoTriangle adopted the Durham County Transit Plan, which includes a CRT project that connects Durham with RTP, Cary, Raleigh, and Garner, providing a reliable alternative to the congested transportation links between these major job centers. The vision of the Durham County Transit Plan is the creation of an exceptional public transportation system with commuter rail, light rail, bus rapid transit, and local and regional bus services, linked together and integrated with communities through good pedestrian and bike access. Durham County leaders consider implementation of the Wake-Durham CRT project vital to this vision and the future transportation system in Durham and the Triangle region.

Wake County voters chose in November 2016 to invest in the Wake Transit Plan with a half-cent transit-designated sales tax. The Wake Transit Plan was sponsored by Wake County, with participation from 10 regional partners. The Wake Transit Plan goals included: connecting all Wake County communities as well as the region, enhancing access to transit and provide frequent, and creating reliable urban mobility. The adopted plan recommends both long-range and near-term solutions for the region, focusing on tripling countywide bus service, increasing the number of high frequency routes running every 15 minutes or less, and adding bus rapid transit (BRT) and commuter rail systems within the next 10 years.

Commuter rail typically operates between central cities and their suburbs and has longer routes, more distant station spacing, higher operating speeds, and higher passenger capacities per trip compared to other rail and bus modes. Service is generally offered all day, with the most frequent service operated during AM and PM peak periods to serve journey-to-work markets. The plans envision that commuter rail would operate in an initial phase along the North Carolina Railroad Corridor for 37 miles between western Durham and southeastern Garner. Future phases include extending service to Hillsborough in Orange County, Apex and Wake Forest in Wake County, and locations in Johnston County.

Major capital projects, such as CRT, will have lasting impact on the transportation infrastructure and operations within the corridors, and are common candidates for formal environmental review processes, as required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). They may also be eligible for federal grants for capital construction. Under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST), state or local government authorities eligible to apply for such capital funding grants are called Project Sponsors.

1 Project Development and Project Sponsorship

Project Development (PD) is the general term for the process of advanced planning, preliminary engineering design, environmental compliance review, and execution of critical agreements and permits required to begin construction of major capital investment projects. In the case of FTA New Start projects, Project Development can also include final engineering design. It is also a locally driven process, having input from members of the community, key agencies, and stakeholders throughout the development and refinement of the project, also

known as a locally preferred alternative (LPA).

The Project Sponsor is the municipality or agency who is initiating the PD process and taking primary responsibility for the oversight and management of the project, including completing any required environmental compliance. Overall, the Project Sponsor must be able to demonstrate that it has the technical capacity and resources to successfully develop, implement, and manage the CRT program.

PROJECT SPONSOR CONSIDERATIONS

The duties of the Project Sponsor will evolve over the course of the PD process as the needs of the project change. The resources that are required at different phases of the project life cycle have common skill sets related to Project Development and Implementation, Operations and Maintenance, or Funding and Administration.

It is ideal to identify a Project Sponsor who has an experienced organization and staff capable of consistently managing the different tasks and activities in these three areas. Some of the many considerations that must be addressed for the proposed CRT project include, but are not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate potential adjustments and relocations with affected utility holders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop procurement packages and execute contracts for design, construction and vehicle acquisition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate and execute all permits as well as interagency and municipal agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage stakeholders and members of the community for input on needs, goals, and solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate potential easements and acquisitions with affected property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate the programming of local funds to support construction and continued operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with the development community to leverage potential public private partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue outside and innovative funding opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support transit oriented land use policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolve design, construction and operating conflicts with partners and stakeholders

Of the available agencies that have presented a desire to serve as a Project Sponsor, GoTriangle is best positioned to effectively manage all phases and aspects of the Wake-Durham Transit CRT program and are well-suited to accommodate most of the considerations in the table above. GoTriangle will use the full depth of its departmental resources to implement the CRT program. Key departments and relationships within the agency's organization include, but are not limited to: Administration & Management, Capital Development, Communications & Public Affairs, Regional Services Development, Transit Operations, and Office of General Counsel. These departments are organized within various groups accountable to the GoTriangle Board of Trustees. In addition, the CRT project spans both Wake and Durham Counties, and GoTriangle is well suited as the regional transit provider in the Triangle.

The following sections outline the general resources and coordinated roles that the Project Team from GoTriangle can offer as during the three phases of the project life cycle.

Project Development and Implementation

GoTriangle's Capital Development department would be best positioned to be the primary manager of all phases of implementation of the CRT project. The Capital Development department leads the expansion and improvement of GoTriangle's regional transit network by producing the highest quality facilities and systems for its customers by advancing regional transportation planning. Capital Development participates in the development and maintenance of the Triangle Regional Travel Model, implementing Regional Public Transit Capital Projects, supporting outreach programs and stakeholder and public involvement, and providing technical assistance to municipalities for their facilitation of transit-oriented land use policies and development in and around station areas.

As a Project Sponsor, the detailed design of the CRT projects would be managed by GoTriangle staff familiar with transit planning, railroad engineering and construction, as well as traffic engineering. They have familiarity and experience in coordinating traffic operations, engineering design, permitting, and construction oversight for large

capital projects. They also have direct access to information regarding the complimentary Durham-Orange Light Rail Project along part of the corridor for resource sharing opportunities. As the CRT corridor crosses multiple jurisdictions, GoTriangle staff is well positioned to work with cooperating agencies and stakeholders throughout the PD process to ensure the continued operational and maintenance needs of the projects are appropriately provided for.

GoTriangle's management team is also well positioned to leverage relationships with host railroads to coordinate CRT while respecting and preserving the current and future freight and intercity passenger rail services along the corridor. Host railroads will be a critical partner in the implementation of CRT along the North Carolina Railroad corridor.

Operations and Maintenance

For smaller commuter rail systems, transit agencies are generally responsible for oversight/regulatory compliance and are not involved in the direct, day-to-day operational and maintenance activities required in providing commuter rail service. Instead, for most newer and smaller commuter rail systems, these services are performed under contract with a service provider. Like for many smaller commuter rail systems, GoTriangle is well positioned for an oversight and regulatory role in managing CRT operations and maintenance. It is recommended that GoTriangle investigate during project development various commuter rail operations and maintenance scenarios in order to inform the agency or organization eventually assigned for operations and maintenance of commuter rail.

Funding and Administration

The Wake-Durham Commuter Rail (CRT) Project is planned to be funded through a combination of Tax District Revenues, state funds, and federal funds. The 2016 ballot initiative authorized the local sales tax rate increase on the citizens of Wake County to pay for the construction of Wake Transit Plan recommendations. Similarly, Durham County commissioners supported their transit referendum and Durham County voters approved a half-cent sales tax for transit in 2011. GoTriangle is in charge of levying the tax; however, they will continue to coordinate the administration of revenues with partner agencies to fund the Project Development and implementation of the CRT Program. A formal process has been developed showing how GoTriangle and the cooperating agencies will be active partners assisting the recommended project sponsor, GoTriangle, in implementation.

GoTriangle's Finance Department is well positioned to program and administer the local funds generated to fund the development, implementation, continued operation and maintenance of the CRT project. The Capital Development and Communications & Public Affairs departments are well positioned to utilize their resources in the areas of economic development and community relations, while the Office of General Counsel represents the Agency's interests in working with property owners, contractors, private citizens, as well as Federal and non-profit coordination to support the Project Team. These sectors have a great understanding of the most appropriate procurement methods and administrative oversight practices for large scale capital and construction projects.

They are familiar with relevant state and federal funding and contracting practices and are well positioned to support the Project team with expertise and resources needed to procure professional services, execute agreements and contracts, and pursue creative innovative outside funding opportunities.

2 Conclusion

The CRT program recommended by the Wake and Durham Transit Plans will include one CRT corridor project that will be programmed for implementation and executed by the Project Sponsor. GoTriangle is the regional public transportation provider to residents and employers in the Triangle, and the CRT corridor will serve both Durham and Wake Counties. The agency has also demonstrated the ability to work with regional agencies, municipalities, and community members to execute major capital projects critical to the health and vitality of the region. The various departments and divisions have resources and technical capacity needed to consistently manage the development and implementation of the CRT corridor between West Durham and Southeast Garner.