



Legislation Text

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Orange County Transit Plan Update.

Staff:

Brian Litchfield, Transit Director
Caroline Dwyer, Project Manager

Department:

Transit
Renaissance Planning

Overview: To present a check-in of the Orange County Transit Plan (OCTP) Update process and draft recommendations for new bus operations and capital projects for preliminary feedback and comments that may inform a draft plan.

**Recommendation(s):**

That the Council provide direction on priorities for the Orange County Transit Plan Update.

Plan Background and Overview:

In 2012, the Orange County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) along with the Durham-Chapel Hill Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) and GoTriangle adopted Orange County's first comprehensive Transit Plan. This Plan was funded using a newly-adopted Article 43 Half-Cent Sales Tax. It included investments in new and expanded bus service and new capital infrastructure projects such as the Chapel Hill North- South Bus Rapid Transit Project, the Hillsborough Train Station, and the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) Project. The Plan was updated in 2017 to meet federal requirements associated with the D-O LRT Project.

In March 2019, the D-O LRT Project was discontinued. This project was central to the Transit Plan; it was the Plan's primary investment, represented a critical partnership between Durham and Orange counties, and served as the transit infrastructure around which other transit services and growth strategies were planned. In response to the discontinuation of the light rail project, a staff team began the process of creating a potential planning framework to create a new Orange County Transit Plan that prioritizes investments, funds service improvements, and improves the resiliency of the public transit network.

At its November 17, 2019 meeting, the Orange County BOCC approved the planning framework for updating the Orange County Transit Plan. The framework included a Policy Steering Committee (PSC) composed of two (2) BOCC Commissioners serving as Co-Chairs, and one representative each from Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, and Mebane to lead the process. The County and/ or municipal appointees are intended to represent the interests of GoTriangle and DCHC MPO.

The PSC is aided by a staff team which is led by County staff and includes representatives from the same organizations as well as staff support from the Triangle J Council of Governments (TJCOG), the Triangle Area Rural Planning Organization (TARPO), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). Both the PSC and the staff team provide direction and guidance to the consulting firm whose tasks include analyzing data, facilitating public input processes, soliciting feedback from specific stakeholders, and drafting the Transit Plan. The new Plan is intended to outline transit investment priorities through 2040.

In January 2020, Orange County Planning staff began work with Renaissance Planning, Inc., the consulting firm chosen to update the Orange County Transit Plan. Over the past two years, planning staff

and the consulting team have established key project deliverables and the timetable for their delivery, defined the scope of the consulting work, established a project website (www.octransit2020.com <<http://www.octransit2020.com>>), created the public participation and outreach plans, and conducted regular meetings with the PSC, transit service providers, and key stakeholders with updates on the plan's progress.

Following is a list of key process milestones carried out by the Consultant, PSC, transit service providers and staff teams:

- Held bi-monthly meetings with progress updates for the PSC during the 2020 calendar year (May 2020)
- Received the Transit Choices Brochure (TCB), a visual document that illustrates the concepts and continuums of transit planning, and the Regional Connections Opportunity (RCO) Report, a technical assessment of key issues and opportunities for effective transit service (July 2020)
- Held the first Transit Summit over the Zoom platform and received a memo of key themes from the summit discussions and first public survey (October 2020)
- Met with Durham City and County representatives to discuss progress of Durham Transit Plan Update relative to the Orange County Transit Plan Update (November 2020)
- Received draft versions of conceptual scenarios and graphics with an accompanying memo (January 2021)
- Held recurring monthly PSC meetings over Zoom with updates for first half of 2021 (January 2021 - June 2021)
- Received final versions of conceptual scenarios and graphics with an accompanying memo (May 2021)
- Held an in-person Transit Summit for PSC members to discuss core values and visions for the fiscally-constrained plan and learned of aspirational future projects (July 2021)
- Received draft recommended network and plan as well as draft conceptual vision map for transit service provider feedback and scheduling of future PSC meetings (October 2021)
- Held PSC Work Session #1 to look at the final recommended network and conceptual vision map with purpose of permitting project management team to begin round 2 of public outreach (January 2022)
- Created public outreach opportunities with a second round of surveying (where over 1,000 surveys were collected) and two focus groups (held on February 8th and February 16th) that included local stakeholders (February 2022)
- Held PSC Work Session #2 to look at the feedback received from public outreach and assess the draft network, which resulted in a request to provide check-in presentations to the local elected boards (March 2022)

Key takeaways from the public outreach include the overall approval of projects as they were outlined and an agreement of the need for more regional projects in the future. After discussing the need to wait for the Transit Plan Governance Study to conclude prior to the Transit Plan Update's adoption, the PSC advised the project management team to begin scheduling check-in meetings with the municipalities in the local government as well as the BOCC.

Remaining Consultant Deliverables - Next Steps

Attachment 1 is a memo from Renaissance Planning that, among other items, outlines its remaining work and next steps of the Transit Plan Update. Generally, these items include:

- Check-in meetings with Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough. (As a courtesy, a check-in has been offered to the GoTriangle Board of Trustees if it can be accommodated in April.)
- Final PSC Work Session (May 20, 2022); and Delivery of a final report to the Orange County staff

team.

Recent Updates on County Transit Plan

- April 8, 2022:
<https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5550817&GUID=2592A3A6-55AB-40FE->
- March 17, 2021:
<https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4853296&GUID=0CFE1E61-AE6D-4C04->



Attachments:

- Update Memo
- Draft Staff Presentation

The Agenda will reflect the text below and/or the motion text will be used during the meeting.

PRESENTER: Brian Litchfield, Transit Director
Caroline Dwyer, Project Manager, Renaissance Planning

RECOMMENDATION: That the Council provide direction on priorities for the Orange County Transit Plan Update.