

Regional Transit Development Plan

Transit Visions and Perceptions

As part of the Strategic Corridors Analysis, one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders in eight member counties of the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) were conducted between February 22 and March 4, 2010. The primary purpose of the stakeholder interviews was to learn about perceptions, concerns or visions of public transit implementation or expansion. These interviews were intended to engage community stakeholders early in the transit planning process and to garner input on potential transportation needs and solutions. General categories of discussion during the one-on-one meetings pertained to issues of:

- Future Transportation Needs
- Potential Transit Services
- Barriers to Transit Use
- Transit System Effectiveness
- Transit Operations Options
- Possible Revenue Options

Thirty-nine interviews were conducted with representatives of the following jurisdictions, agencies or organizations:

Alamance County

- Alamance County
- Alamance County Transit Authority (ACTA)
- City of Burlington
- Alamance Chamber of Commerce

Davie County

- Davie County
- Davie County EDC
- Davie Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Mocksville
- Town of Bermuda Run
- Town of Cooleemee

Davidson County

- Davidson County
- Davidson County EDC
- City of Thomasville
- Lexington Chamber of Commerce

Rockingham County

- Rockingham County
- Rockingham County EDC

Randolph County

- Randolph County
- Randolph County EDC
- Randolph County Area Transit System (RCATS)

Stokes County

- Stokes County
- Stokes County EDC
- Town of Walnut Cove
- Town of Danbury
- King Chamber of Commerce

Surry County

- Surry County
- Town of Pilot Mountain
- Town of Dobson

Yadkin County

- Yadkin County
- Town of Yadkinville
- Town of Jonesville
- Town of Boonville
- Yadkinville Chamber of Commerce
- Yadkin Valley Economic Development District (YVEDDI)

Major conclusions drawn from stakeholder interview comments are listed by county:

Alamance County

- Transit could play a more prominent role in connecting Alamance County residents to jobs and health care services located in both the Triad and Triangle. There is a desire to improve connections to other parts of the region.
- Transit is part of the solution to address regional and community mobility needs.
- An effective transit system meets the mobility needs of its intended customers. It must be well-used, be “visible” to the public, and be supported by elected officials.
- Regional commuter bus services operating from park-and-ride lots along I-40 are the highest transit priority. There also is a need for circulator services from these park-and-ride facilities to connect to major destinations within Alamance County.
- The greatest barriers to transit use are the lack of available services, public perceptions regarding the need for transit services, and the historical reliance of County residents on the automobile for transportation needs.
- Increased public awareness of transit’s benefits, higher fuel prices and improved economic conditions are required before Alamance County residents would likely support additional taxes or fees to begin or expand transit services.

Davie County

- Transit can help to meet regional commuting needs because many County residents work in Forsyth County, particularly at Wake Forest/Baptist Medical Center. Davie County residents, particularly senior citizens, also have to drive to medical appointments in Winston-Salem.
- Intra-county transit services would help to meet mobility needs of aging population. The demand for YVEDDI service appears to exceed the community operator’s capacity.
- An effective transit system responds to community needs; it takes citizens where they want to go in order to sustain life activities.
- PART’s new commuter bus service from the park-and-ride lot at I-40 and US-601 provides a regional transit link. Baptist Hospital’s plans for a new medical complex at I-40 and NC-801 represent an opportunity for another PART transit center in Davie County.
- The most significant barriers to transit use are service frequency, convenience of transit stops, and assurance that commuters can return to car in case of emergencies. Greater public awareness of available services could also increase transit use.
- Benefits of transit service expansion would have to be quantified and communicated effectively in order for County residents to consider dedicated taxes or fees.

Davidson County

- Residential growth in northern part of Davidson County has resulted in increased commuting to Winston-Salem and High Point. Many of these trips are from five to eight miles long so transit service design will be important to attract them to a bus.
- Davidson County community transit system transports 70,000 to 80,000 persons annually, between 6AM and 5PM on weekdays. County will soon begin fixed-route service in Thomasville with a bus provided by HiTran and evaluating similar service in Lexington.

- Davidson County is working with the City of Lexington and N.C. Department of Transportation on implementing a new multi-modal station in downtown Lexington.
- There is a need for circulator service to PART park-and-ride facilities so residents without cars can access commuter bus services.
- An effective transit system must be convenient and well-used by its customers.
- The greatest barrier to increased transit use is the convenience associated with auto driving and the lack of transit service alternatives that meet travel needs. Davidson County's low residential density also hampers provision of cost-effective transit services.
- Although current economic conditions would be a major deterrent to public support for higher taxes, planning now for new transit services is sound so the county and region will be ready when the economic environment improves.

Randolph County

- Expansion of PART commuter bus services would make them more attractive to Randolph County residents traveling to Guilford and Forsyth destinations.
- Increased PART services to Randolph County locations such as the NC Zoo would be beneficial. The need for fixed-route or deviated fixed-route services within Asheboro should be studied.
- An effective transit system is convenient and cost-effective.
- Barriers to increased use of transit include a lack of public awareness of available services, connectivity to systems in adjoining counties, and current fuel prices.
- Raising public awareness of transit services currently operated in Randolph County would be necessary for possible citizen approval in the long term to add \$1.00 to the vehicle tax. The existing tax of \$1.00 per vehicle generates over \$140,000 annually for transit operations.

Rockingham County

- Transit can play a role in addressing the need for connections to jobs located in the urban areas of the Triad. Transit can provide economical access for County residents to jobs in Greensboro, Winston-Salem and the PTI area, particularly when fuel prices increase again.
- Commuter bus services operating in the US-220 corridor (Mayodan and other park and ride locations) and US-29 (Reidsville) are the highest transit priority.
- Intra-county transit services could be difficult to operate because of dispersed travel patterns. However, residents, particularly senior citizens and disabled, would benefit from expanded mobility options.
- An effective transit system operates near residential concentrations and connects to popular destinations. The service should operate at convenient times and be reasonably priced.
- The overall lack of transit services is the major barrier to greater use by County residents.
- Higher fuel prices and improved economic climate would be required to gain resident support of taxes to finance transit service start-up.

Stokes County

- Transit is not a major factor in addressing mobility needs in Stokes County. The northern portion of the county is more oriented to Virginia destinations. The

southwestern portion of county (King) includes commuters to Winston-Salem while southeastern Stokes County (Walnut Cove) is more oriented to Greensboro.

- Expansion of PART bus service in US-52 corridor should include more frequent service and a new park-and-ride lot in the Pinnacle area. Forsyth destinations for County commuters include Baptist Hospital and RJ Reynolds.
- YVEDDI's community transit services seem to operate fine within Stokes County.
- An effective transit system should be "user-friendly". Transit must add value to potential customers in order to attract users.
- Major barriers to increased transit use by Stokes County residents include love of automobile and independence provided by that mode, lack of knowledge of available transit options, and county's geography/lack of population density.
- In order for Stokes County residents to support taxes for transit expansion, the mode's benefits must be clearly stated so public understanding increases.

Surry County

- Expansion of commuter bus services to Winston-Salem and other regional locations would be beneficial, but there also is a need for improved intra-county connections to promote local employment opportunities. Persons are more inclined to use transit during difficult economic conditions.
- An effective transit system is convenient (picks you up where you are and takes you where you want to go). The system includes clean equipment, operates on-time and has useful service frequencies.
- Barriers to transit use among Surry County residents are lack of knowledge of transit options, prompting a need for more public education; service frequency and service convenience; and need to generate revenues for service operation and expansion.
- Transit would have to become a higher profile need among county residents in order for consideration of dedicated taxes for service expansion. Residents would have to be shown the savings associated with transit in order for all citizens to share in the cost.

Yadkin County

- Transit could play a more prominent role in connecting Yadkin County residents to jobs located in Winston-Salem and Greensboro. Interest in PART's commuter bus services will grow as traffic congestion increases. YVEDDI service also needs to grow to meet the travel demands by elderly and disabled clients.
- Possible locations for new park-and-ride lots for commuter bus services include East Bend and Jonesville.
- An effective transit system operates on-time and is convenient. The system must be well-marketed so residents consider the service as a viable option.
- Barriers to transit use are independence provided by auto travel and perception of transit as a second-class means of transportation.
- Increased public awareness of transit's benefits and improved economic conditions are required before Yadkin County residents would likely support a vehicle tax to expand transit services.