

# Regional Transit Development Plan

BUILDING OUR FUTURE → THE TIME IS NOW

ALAMANCE DAVIE DAVIDSON FORSYTH GUILFORD RANDOLPH ROCKINGHAM STOKES SURRY YADKIN

## Final Draft 30-Day Public Comment Period Report

As part of the public outreach process PART conducted a 30-Day Public Review for the RTDP. This comment period ran from September 11, 2010 until October 11, 2010. The methods used to provide notice of the comment period are listed below.

- **September 11 & 15, 2010:** Public notice ran in newspapers (Greensboro News & Record and Winston-Salem Journal)
- **September 11 & 15, 2010:** Legal notice ran in newspapers (Greensboro News & Record and Winston-Salem Journal)
- **September 13, 2010:** Posted final draft and notice on PART web site
- **September 13, 2010:** Sent notice to 405 individuals and agencies in RTDP Email list and other interested parties
- **September 14, 2010:** Sent notice to PART email list
- **September 15, 2010:** Issued press release to 64 media contacts. Asked each MPO and RPO to send notice to their Email list

The comments that were received were vetted, categorized and summarized. Below is the list of categorized comments.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Comments regarding plan layout/physical content</li> <li>☞ Route suggestions                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adjustments to RTDP proposed routes</li> <li>○ Approval of route/infrastructure proposals</li> </ul> </li> <li>☞ Schedule suggestions</li> <li>☞ Infrastructure suggestions</li> <li>☞ Safety concerns</li> <li>☞ Call for stronger rail component</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Concern with equitable treatment of large urban centers</li> <li>☞ Question regarding specific plan components</li> <li>☞ Disagreement with specific plan components</li> <li>☞ Concerns with validity / implementation of RTDP</li> <li>☞ General distrust of planning efforts</li> <li>☞ General displeasure in choice of consultant</li> </ul> |
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In response to the comments, typos, corrections and enhancements to the graphics will be made. Several comments questioned the routing and need for some of the new services. The RTDP is a vision and recommendations are conceptual. These comments deal more with a detailed analysis of these routes and service prior to implementation. More detailed analysis and public input will need to be

done on most of the recommendations when funding is acquired and before implementation. Two changes to the plan are recommended as the result of public comment. They are:

**Danbury Connector:** In Stokes County new service from Winston-Salem to Walnut Cove, continuing into Rockingham County was recommended. During a presentation of the RTDP to a group in Stokes, a fixed route connection from Walnut Cove to Danbury was suggested. Since the primary trip purpose of this connection would be for medical it was added to the recommendations. Identified as the Walnut Cove / Danbury Circulator it added \$140,000 to O & M cost and \$182,000 in capital cost. This raised the funding formula for Stokes County from a \$5.00 vehicle registration tax to \$8.00.

**Transit Emphasis Corridors (TEC) in Greensboro:** Originally six Transit Emphasis Corridors were identified by Greensboro planners and the project consultant. Within these TEC's there would be 15-minute headways, enhanced rider amenities and promotion of transit oriented development. Operational cost in a TEC is higher than that of a standard fixed route.

W. Market Street was not originally considered for TEC status. While W. Market is with the fixed guideway study corridor and has several planned stations, the introduction of rail or bus rapid transit service was outside the 15 year vision for the RTDP. Adding another TEC to the recommendations would unbalance the funding plan. However, after further discussion it was decided to indicate that the corridors were potential locations for TEC's and that economics, GTA's 5-Year system plan update and further land use studies would guide the exact location of a TEC should funding be acquired. So, all the TEC's are shown as potential and W. Market Street will be added.

Following is a summary of all the comments received.

**Comments regarding plan layout/physical content:**

- **Plan length:** You might get more and better comments if you boiled those hundreds of pages down to a couple of pages of key findings. That's an awful lot of information to wade through.
- **Map adjustment:** Add the new Hospital in Kernersville to the map. Between the I-40/B-40 split and NC 66, above I-40, and west of Macy Grove.
- **Map Legend:** It would be helpful to the reader to have definitions/explanations of the different types of corridors shown on the maps (e.g. BRT Gold Route, Transit Emphasis Corridors, etc.). You may be able to incorporate them on page 29 in the introductory paragraph.
- **Map Legend:** Maps on pages 34-36: the PTI shuttle Service area is not shown on the legend, but the area is shown on the map. It would be helpful to add it to the legend.  
Gorman, Eric <Gorman@pbworld.com>

**Route suggestions:**

- **Adjustments to RTDP proposed routes:**
  - **Transit emphasis corridor:** W. Market/Spring Garden/ W. Wendover Consider modifying the route to travel from Spring Garden to W. Market Street, terminating at the future PART regional intermodal transit center/PTI Airport.
    - This corridor has more opportunity for new transit oriented redevelopment along W. Market Street as opposed to the auto-oriented Wendover area. This transit emphasis

corridor would also help build ridership in the potential future rail corridor that runs parallel to W. Market Street.

- **Oak Ridge and Summerfield express routes:** Consider extending an express route to accommodate the town of Stokesdale.
- **220 South Road terminating at Guilford County/Randolph County line:** Could this be served by the 220 route from Asheboro to Greensboro?
- **Gold Line BRT:** If the intent of the route is to operate as bus rapid transit, we recommend rerouting the Gold Line in such a manner that will increase the daily ridership given the frequent 10-15 minute headways. Our recommended modification would be to travel as follows:
  - NC A&T University
  - Downtown Greensboro/ Depot
  - UNC-Greensboro (via W. Lee St., UNCG accessed via new pedestrian underpass)
  - Four Seasons Town Center (via High Point Road)
  - I-40 to PTI and Forsyth County
- If the Gold Line's intent is to generate ridership with frequent service, we think this route would have higher ridership demand based on GTA's existing ridership patterns. This route accesses UNCG, more transit dependent populations, and Four Seasons Town Center. Ridership in this corridor has been proven with the High Point Road route being GTA's third highest ridership route.
- The Piedmont Gold Line's current proposed route travels up Bryan Boulevard accessing the Friendly Center and suburban employment along Green Valley Road. The surrounding residential areas are middle to high income. The majority of Bryan Boulevard lacks sidewalks making it difficult for pedestrians to access the route. For these reasons we question whether or not your proposed route would generate more riders for a bus rapid transit service.
- **More downtown Winston-Salem bus stops:** What about multiple stops in downtown Winston-Salem on the route from King? (Comment related to "Safety Concerns" below).
- **Greensboro street car:** This looks like a variation of the HEAT service that is already operating. Rather than instituting an additional service, wouldn't it make more sense to ensure future funding for HEAT, and perhaps modify it to include additional destinations such as Moses Cone? Intuitively, I feel that streetcars thrive in areas with tourist-related attractions, so maybe a system more limited in scope, serving the baseball stadium, downtown bars, future greenway nodes, cultural district, etc. would be more effective.
- **Extension of US 311 North Express:** In Stokes County new service from Winston-Salem to Walnut Cove was recommended. A connection from Walnut Cove to Danbury was suggested. (This comment was received during a presentation of the RTDP.)
- **Approval of RTDP route/infrastructure proposals:**
  - **Elkin:** I live close to Elkin and noticed the possibility of having the bus/route come to Elkin/Jonesville. I think that is a wonderful idea. As long as the time fits my schedule I would definitely get on the bus there instead of the Asbury Church Road Park and Ride.
  - **Northern Guilford, Rockingham and Stokes:** I have reviewed the PART documents and I am very satisfied with the PART 2025 planning for northern Guilford County as well as Rockingham

and Stokes counties. The inclusion of both Madison and Mayodan as well as Walnut Cove would give a good chance for many more people in those rural areas to have transportation access.

- **Northwest Guilford:** The RTDP, it is appropriately ambitious. I am glad to see that some Guilford County communities (i.e. Oak Ridge, Summerfield, Forest Oaks) are receiving attention for park and ride facilities.
- **Winston-Salem streetcar** proposal support. On the city level, it will increase economic activity downtown as well as by the new baseball park, which is a focal point of that city.

#### **Schedule suggestions:**

- **Weekend routes:** There is a need for some bus routes running on week-ends—mainly to hospitals. More and more seniors would like to visit sick members of their church and/or friends but are unable to drive. The main reason is that many do not drive because of trouble walking, vision problems and/or they do not like to drive in heavy volume traffic. I'm mainly thinking about lower income persons and church members who would like to travel together.

#### **Infrastructure suggestions:**

- **Summerfield park & ride:** I urge PART to open the Summerfield Park & Ride as soon as possible as a Park & Ride set-up with access to downtown Greensboro would give a lot of Summerfield residents reasonably priced and great access to the PART network and the GTA system.

#### **Safety concerns:**

- **Winston-Salem transit center:** Safety is in question at the bus stops in the Liberty Street transit center. Troubled by loiterers at the transit center and uncomfortable walking the 2 blocks from there to job site.

#### **Call for stronger rail component in plan:**

- **Rail transit:** should be the focus of our nation, the state of North Carolina and our region as opposed to more petroleum dependent buses, vans and vehicles which would increase the need for more new highways and destruction of farmland and tree canopy.
  - PART [has] an obligation to adopt policies addressing the impacts associated with Global Climate Change in long-term planning and environmental review programs.
  - North Carolina's population and annual vehicle miles traveled per person are increasing rapidly.
  - The United States is spending half a trillion dollars per year for foreign oil, making the U.S. current account deficit impossible to manage and the value of the dollar increasingly vulnerable, threatening our national economy and security.
  - Failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions increases the likelihood of catastrophic impacts of climate change from melting ice sheets and rising sea levels, widespread land and marine species extinction, intensified natural disasters, threatened water supplies, and a public health crisis.
- **Economic stimulus through rail-based public transportation** connecting the four cities in our region, Winston-Salem, High-Point, Kernersville, and Greensboro. It is imperative for us as an economic center of this state that we have a light rail system that at the least connects these four cities with a San Francisco BART or a Washington-DC Metro like system. If we were able to do this alone, we would surely grow our economic base.
  - For the sake of our state economy, we need to go even further and support all efforts to link all of our metropolitan centers: Asheville, the Piedmont Triad, the RTP area, and the Greenville and Fayetteville areas as well as one or more coastal cities. We could leverage our entire state population if someone could live in Winston and work in RTP, live in Asheville and work in

Charlotte, live in Greenville and work in Winston. We have a lot of people locked into their homes now because of the mortgage crises. If the people can't leave their homes to relocate to where the jobs are in the state, we should at least make it easier for them to consider a long commute to a good job.

- Mass transit will be a key consideration in planning for our growth in this state in the very near future.

**Concern with equitable treatment of large urban centers:**

- **A bona fide rail corridor** going all the way through Winston-Salem, with future potential for connection to other parts of the state, is important.
  - Winston-Salem may be left out of a corridor of rail transportation connecting RTP and Charlotte that is being considered from the federal stimulus package that's been allotted to NC. It is important that all four cities of the triad be connected to this corridor.

**Questions regarding specific plan components:**

- **Piedmont Gold Line/Rail precursor:** What is the ultimate purpose of the Piedmont Gold Line as a transit route? The currently proposed route and service frequency appear to operate as a mix between bus rapid transit and express service. The route's pathway is more typical of an express route whereas the service frequency is more typical of bus rapid transit.
- If the intent of the route is to operate as an express route, we suggest keeping the current route and changing headways to every 30 minutes off peak. A potential route deviation to access UNCG en route to Friendly Center might also help increase ridership as well. If overall travel time is a primary reason for routing the Gold Line down Bryan Boulevard, PART might consider requesting transit signal priority along W. Lee Street/High Point Road if they want to balance ridership and trip travel time.

**Disagreement with specific plan component(s):**

- **Streetcars:** The plan elements that call for the installation of streetcars in Winston Sale and Greensboro are strategic errors. Regardless of who recommended these items, I fear they will succeed only in giving the opponents of mass transit the excuse they need to vote against dedicating additional sales taxes or other fees for transit purposes. Even as a transit supporter, I believe the need for downtown circulators to be much more cost effectively met by rubber-tired trolleys rather than by digging up streets to re-install rail. This is especially true since available vehicle technology includes options that are arguably equal, in terms of environmental sustainability, to using electricity generated by coal-fired plants to feed electrical catenaries. In short, advocating the re-institution of rail-based downtown streetcars risks having this idea become the focal point for anti-transit sentiment. While I understand the difficulty of addressing this concern at this point in the process, I am concerned that a rail-based streetcar initiative will erode public support for new transit funding.

**Concerns with validity / implementation of RTDP:**

- Forsyth County and Guilford County have created so many large commercial areas that mass transit, whether it be bus or rail, cannot realistically sustain so many areas. If [an entity] doesn't have the funding or the staff available to resolve their existing problems, they shouldn't spend their limited funding on a wish list for the future; because, by not resolving their existing problems, their investors will move elsewhere. Feels there will be no problem with getting local officials to approve plan—just unlikely to get them to follow through with implementation.

### General distrust of planning efforts:

- It is an unfortunate flaw of nearly all long-term planning efforts that I have been involved in (transportation or otherwise) that such efforts tend to be high-jacked by small groups of “true believers” in some grand idea or concept. This is a near self-fulfilling prophesy in that only those people with strong opinions/ideas tend to be willing to devote the time needed to participate in such efforts, especially during the early stages of such initiatives. The unfortunate result of this tendency is that such concepts tend to get incorporated into planning documents with relatively little broad-based vetting, generally due to public apathy. However, once the plans get to the point of action or implementation – especially when that implementation has public cost implications – ideas/concepts that lacked any inherent broad-base of support tend to become the focus of project opposition, whether due to true differences in opinion or for sheer political purposes. When this occurs, the result can be disastrous for visionary efforts in terms of securing the popular or political support needed to accomplish the vital, well-conceived objectives.
- Not overly optimistic about our future land-use and transportation planning—since land-use has always been the priority with infrastructure following and sprawl the norm.

### General displeasure in choice of consultant:

- Why does PART insist on employing HDR or any consultant? PART staff and local municipal APA certified planners should be able to prepare Regional Transit Development Plans and transportation and land-use programs following current APA Planning Policies and NEPA Law. HDR was also hired by PART to prepare the original Heart of the Triad (HOT) Plan. PART and HDR lost credibility with the public during the HOT planning process.
- It bothers me to see PART and HDR have both their names on another land-use and transportation document. (Referencing past displeasure with the Heart of the Triad Plan).

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