

Item Title: Approval of the East Wake Microtransit Agreement

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners approves the East Wake Agreement for Wake County/GoWake Access to provide Microtransit Services to the Towns of Wendell, Knightdale, and Zebulon.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners must approve agreements with local and state governmental entities and private non-profit corporations.

Background: In 2020, Wake County was awarded the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) Grant to implement the Northeastern Wake County Rural Microtransit Service as a pilot. This service, branded GoWake SmartRide NE, provides a curb-to-curb service in the Towns of Wendell, Zebulon, and parts of Knightdale, and Rolesville and in the unincorporated regions of Wake County between those municipalities.

GoWake SmartRide NE operated through June 2024 using funding from the FTA IMI Grant. To keep the service continuing, the towns of Wendell, Knightdale and Zebulon applied for and received funding from the Wake Transit Plan. Wake County allocated funding in the FY 2025 adopted budget to cover the unincorporated areas served by the program.

The East Wake Microtransit agreement will continue the GoWake SmartRide NE program between the Towns and the County, and outline duties and responsibilities of the four (4) parties.

Strategic Plan: This action supports multiple goals including Growth, Land Use and Environment Goal 1: Between 2024 and 2029, 97% of growth and development will be directed toward cities and towns that provide municipal services, transportation, and utilities; Goal 2: By 2029, increase public transit ridership by 10%; and Inclusive Prosperity Goal 1: By 2029, 5% more residents asked will indicate low barriers to employment, such as access to broadband, childcare, and transportation.

Fiscal Impact: Wake County/GoWake Access estimates the full cost of the program to be \$430,000, which was budgeted into the FY 2025 Transportation Fund. The Wake County/GoWake Access portion of the cost is \$71,653. The remaining budget of \$355,530 will be split between Wake County, Knightdale, Wendell, and Zebulon.

Additional Information:

The GoWake SmartRide NE program was created to enhance mobility options in Northeast Wake County. Wake County has a population of over 1.09 million residents, with nearly 200,000 residing in the rural parts of the county. Despite the Raleigh metropolitan area (which includes Wake County) being the 10th fastest growing urbanized area in the United States, there are still rural areas in the county with a considerable number of low-income and minority populations, mainly in the unincorporated NE region. This area lacks basic mobility options to access regional commuter and local fixed-route transit services. The primary goal of GoWake SmartRide is to significantly increase access to public transportation for residents who are not served by a fixed route bus service. The service operates Monday through Friday from 6:00AM to 7:00PM.

In FY 2024, GoWake SmartRide provided over 14,000 trips to the areas noted in the graph below.

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Monthly Trips | <u>July</u> | <u>August</u> | <u>Sept</u> | <u>October</u> | <u>Nov</u> | <u>Dec</u> |
| | 1,235 | 1,413 | 1,129 | 1,219 | 1,048 | 955 |
| Monthly Trips | <u>January</u> | <u>Feb</u> | <u>March</u> | <u>April</u> | <u>May</u> | <u>June</u> |
| | 1,249 | 1,327 | 1,225 | 1,415 | 1,442 | 1,009 |
| Total Trips | 14,666 | | | | | |

The combined cost of the GoWake SmartRide NE program is outlined below:

| Program Costs | Annual Operating | Annual Technology | Annual Fuel | Total Annual Cost |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Combined Town | \$294,378 | \$19,539 | \$41,613 | \$355,530 |
| Wake County / GoWake Access | \$59,328 | \$3,938 | \$8,387 | \$71,653 |
| Total Costs | \$353,706 | \$23,447 | \$50,000 | \$427,183 |
| Wake Transit Match CFA Funding | | | | \$177,765 |

Attachments:

1. FY 2025 East Wake Microtransit 4-Party Agreement