

Item Title: Additional Funding for GoWake Access Transportation Program

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners accepts and appropriates \$900,000 in additional budget capacity in the Transportation Fund to support the continuation of Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) services through the GoWake Access program.

Item Summary:

Purpose: In accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve amendments that increase the budget for a fund.

Background: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) is a required benefit under Medicaid that provides transportation for eligible recipients without other means to access medical services. This includes trips to doctor appointments, dialysis, physical therapy, and more. NEMT covers various transportation modes, including public transit, paratransit vans, taxis, wheelchair vans, and ambulances for non-emergency needs.

In FY2026, GoWake Access renewed the annual agreement for Medicaid transportation services with the Wake County Social Services Department. This is a standard annual operating agreement. Due to increased operational costs, Wake County Social Services is increasing its contract amount with Wake County GoWake Access from \$5,337,498 to \$6,237,498 to sustain transportation.

Strategic Plan: This action supports Growth, Land Use and Environment Goal 2: By 2029, increase public transit ridership by 10%; and Community Health and Wellbeing Goal 4: By 2029, three out of four residents asked will indicate low barriers to accessing benefits and assistance programs and resources, such as food and utilities, childcare, employment services, housing, etc.

Fiscal Impact: The FY2026 Transportation Fund expenditures are estimated to increase by \$900,000 to support Medicaid transportation services through the GoWake Access program. This increase is fully supported by additional reimbursement revenue from the Wake County Social Services Medicaid Program, resulting in a corresponding increase to both the expenditure and revenue budgets. No additional County share or matching funds are required.

Additional Information:

GoWake Access Transportation provides services to vulnerable populations across Wake County. GoWake Access provides a subsidized, door-to-door transportation service at a customer cost of \$4 per trip for the general public and fare-free under Medicaid. It allows residents with limited or no transportation options to be able to access basic accommodations such as medical services, employment, and groceries. This is not an all-inclusive list of everyone who may need the service, but of those who call in to request service.

In FY2026, operational costs for the service increased to fully capture all expenses associated with it. GoWake Access operates on a shared ride and cost model, meaning that the cost for each trip is distributed among all the funding sources associated with the vehicle. When demand decreases, the cost per trip rises because fewer trips are being shared among passengers on the vehicle.

Funding Year	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026*
Agreement Amount	\$3,802,234.24	\$3,842,455.62	\$4,039,467.91	\$6,237,498.00
Hourly Rate	\$72.10	\$53.10	\$58.70	\$121.81
# of Trips	101,120	107,953	79,532	83,115

*FY2026 represents end-of-year projections

Attachments:

1. Budget Memo – FY2026 Human Service Transportation Fund