

Item Title: Wake Transit Update

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners receives the FY 2019 Wake Transit Annual Report.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Manager's report provides an opportunity to share information with the Board.

Background: The planning, implementation, and funding of projects is governed by the Wake Transit Governance Interlocal Agreement, to which CAMPO, GoTriangle, and Wake County are parties.

The Wake Transit ILA requires an "Annual Wake Transit Report" which should include information regarding meeting strategic public transit objectives and includes the performance achieved, strategies being followed, and key milestones for capital projects and operating services. GoTriangle, serving as the tax district, is required to submit the annual report and a copy of their annual financial statement for the Wake Transit major operating and capital funds by December 15th of each year to Wake County and CAMPO.

Board Goal: The information presented in the annual report will give Wake Transit specific information to the Board of Commissioners in support of their Board Goal to "Establish a deliberate and realistic approach to address growth and mobility while preserving our environment and enhancing our quality of life."

Fiscal Impact: Projects are included in the Wake Transit Plan, funded in large part by the ½ cent local option sales tax for transit, approved by Wake County voters in November 2016. Additional federal funding is assumed in later years of the Wake Transit Plan for major capital projects such as Bus Rapid Transit and Commuter Rail.

Additional Information:

Wake County continues to work in partnership with transit stakeholders on implementation of the Wake County Transit Plan. FY 2019 marked the second full year of Wake Transit implementation. The first year of the plan implementation focused on adding increased mid-day and Sunday services; those changes alone grew ridership by 7 percent. The second year of implementation continued those investments but at a larger scale.

In January, the City of Raleigh started service on 13 miles of city streets that previously did not have service, including service to the new Southeast Raleigh YMCA, Southeast Raleigh High, PNC Arena, and the NC Art Museum. Service on MLK Blvd. was also increased to every 15 minutes; ridership on that route grew 60 percent over the prior year. Overall, bus ridership continues to grow. In FY 2019, ridership grew 7 percent over FY 2018, or a 14% growth since the start of Wake Transit implementation. In addition, in FY 2019 GoWake Access provided an additional Wake Transit funded 1,779 trips to rural, elderly, and disabled riders, for a total 8,379 Wake Transit trips in FY 2019.

The adopted Wake Transit Plan acknowledged that the first few years would involve significant design and further study. Transit partners would need to work together to develop a detailed plan to identify and prioritize enhanced bus service and facilities. The Wake Transit Plan assumptions included major infrastructure projects like Bus Rapid Transit and Commuter Rail which would require 50 percent funding from the federal government. Further refinement of these projects is needed for successful federal grant applications.

Several of those refinement studies are now complete and better position Wake Transit implementation. During FY 2019, the ten-year Wake Bus Plan was adopted which provides a prioritized ten-year road map for bus service in the County. The Major Investment Study for Bus Rapid Transit is complete which shows that all four Bus Rapid Transit Corridors merit further work and appear competitive for federal funding. The Major Investment Study for Commuter Rail completed a peer review, evaluated potential station locations, human and environmental considerations, and potential frequencies of commuter rail service. Program guidelines were adopted guiding the Community Funding Area Program for local Wake communities; Wake County towns can now apply for 50 percent matching funds to start their own transit services.

The City of Raleigh has submitted the first Bus Rapid Transit Corridor, New Bern Avenue, for federal funding consideration. Design for this corridor has begun; the first design kick-off meeting for the New Bern Corridor was in June, and subsequently the City has been updating those designs during this fall and holding various engagement sessions. GoTriangle, working with the counties of Wake, Durham, Orange and Johnston, the CAMPO and DCHC Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the North Carolina Railroad Company continues work on the Commuter Rail Project, including additional analysis of service scenarios, refining conceptual level cost estimates, refining project timetables, and updating ridership projections using the federal S.T.O.P.S model for the original project and for any proposed expansions.

Work on smaller scale capital projects continues. In FY 2019 the City of Raleigh completed engineering and design work for 43 bus stops, ordered an additional 23 compressed natural gas buses, and secured a \$1.6 million FTA grant for five electric buses leveraging Wake Transit funds. GoTriangle secured a \$20 million BUILD grant for the Raleigh Union Station Bus Facility. GoCary continues work on a Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility and continued progress on its proposed downtown multi-modal transit facility with work related to site selection and the federal NEPA process.

Subsequent to the end of FY 2019, GoTriangle started service to Wake Tech's RTP Campus and created a new North Raleigh Express along I-540 from Triangle Town Center to RTP. The towns of Knightdale and Garner now have all day service instead of express service in the morning and evenings. The Town of Rolesville now has express service connecting the Town to the Wake Tech Northern Campus and Triangle Town Center, where riders can connect to routes into downtown Raleigh and RTP. GoCary has been working with the Town of Holly Springs to finalize the service connecting Holly Springs with the larger transit network and service will begin this winter on Weston Parkway in Cary and Park Center in Morrisville. The Towns of Apex, Morrisville, and Fuquay-Varina have finished their Community Funding Area Program studies and are evaluating whether to submit for operating funding for service beginning in FY 2021. And, additional service for the Town of Wake Forest's circulator will begin in January.

Finally, more than 6,600 teens ages 13-18 signed up for a Youth GoPass between July 2018 and June 30, 2019. A common fare strategy has been adopted by GoTriangle, GoRaleigh, and GoCary and seniors 65 and older now ride free on all fixed routes regardless of transit provider. A vendor has been selected for mobile ticketing and work is underway to implement this technology to have it ready by mid-2020.

The Manager's report provides the Board an opportunity to ask any questions about the material presented in the FY 2019 Annual Report or the accompanying annual GoTriangle financial statement which includes the Wake Transit major operating and capital funds. Staff will also present information on the timetable for next steps. Staff will provide a follow-up briefing on transit issues at the February work session.

Attachments:

1. Presentation
2. FY 2019 Annual Report
3. GoTriangle FY 2019 CAFR