



TOWN OF CARRBORO

NORTH CAROLINA

TRANSMITTAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT

DELIVERED VIA: ☐ HAND ☒ MAIL ☐ FAX ☐ EMAIL

To: David Andrews, Town Manager
Mayor & Board of Aldermen

From: Tina Moon, Planning Administrator

CC: Patricia McGuire, Planning Director

Date: February 2, 2017

Subject: Orange County Transit Plan

Background

The Orange County Bus and Rail Investment Plan (BRIP), adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on October 2, 2012, describes the commitment for transit improvements using local transit revenue sources such as the sales tax and car registration fees through the year 2035. The plan was mutually approved through an Interlocal Implementation Agreement by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro-Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC-MPO) Board and the GoTriangle Board of Trustees on October 24, 2012. On November 6, 2012, Orange County voters passed a referendum approving a half-cent (\$0.005) sales tax for transit improvements. The Board of Aldermen endorsed the BRIP along with recommendations on May 24, 2011.

As required by the Agreement, the plan must be reviewed by a Staff Working Group (SWG) every four years, and must be updated through formal adoption by the three parties to the Agreement if proposed changes to the plan exceed certain thresholds. As several changes have occurred--additions to the number of projects, modifications to the scope of projects and adjustments in funding from state and federal revenue sources--the SWG has determined that a formal update is needed. The SWG—consisting of Orange County, DCHC-MPO, and GoTriangle staff – together with staff from all the municipalities in the County, is in the process of reevaluating the projects and services in the original OCBRIP, with a focus on timing, funding, ongoing maintenance commitments, and assumptions about changes in costs and revenues. The group has also developed a public outreach strategy and communication plan for bringing information and recommendations to the governing boards. The DCHC-MPO and

GoTriangle staff are also working with Durham County to prepare an update to the Durham plan. The collaborative effort is designed to review and approve both documents—renamed as the Orange County Transit Plan and the Durham County Transit Plan respectively.

2012 Orange County Bus and Rail Investment Plan

The existing Orange County BRIP includes funding for bus expansion and bus operations, including the North-South Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Project (N-S BRT), in Chapel Hill, small capital bus projects or access improvement projects, and the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project (DO LRT). Significant changes that affect the financial plan for these projects include are described below.

Transit Funding in General

- More funding is needed to maintain the bus and rail services outlined in the plan for future years.
- Federal and state funding shares for bus expansion and capital projects have decreased significantly since the original plan requiring additional local funding for these projects.
- GoTriangle is using a new sales tax revenue forecast.
- Additional federal transportation funding is being considered to fund elements of the plans, if needed. This funding may come from monies intended for local transportation projects (such as bike/ped projects) through the MPO's competitive allocation process.

DO LRT

- The Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision selected a preferred route for the project and it includes an extension of the line to North Carolina Central University—adding to the cost of the overall project. The schedule for construction has also been delayed due, in large part, to the updated financing requirements.
- State law has limited state funding to ten percent of the project cost for light rail and commuter rail projects. As the original financial model anticipated twenty-percent of funding coming from the state the ten-percent cap represents a loss of approximately \$250 million.
- GoTriangle approached the Durham and Orange counties, and the DCHC-MPO regarding options to address the shortage.
- GoTriangle subsequently hired consultants to reexamine their financial modeling and now believe that there are sufficient funds to construct the project; however, FTA requires a strategy to account for possible overages (sensitivity models) to ensure project completion.
- Reserves are now included in the plan.
- Foundations, endowments, and private contributions are being considered to fund elements of the plans.

N-S-BRT

- The North-South Bus Rapid Transit project has increased in scope and cost as the project has progressed from the feasibility study to the design phase.
- Reserves are now included in the plan.

Draft Orange County Transit Plan

The working draft of Orange County Transit Plan (outline attached) also includes approximately \$5.9 million of expenditures for bus capital projects during the next twenty years (2037). The funding will be allocated as shown in the table and described below:

Type of Project	Percentage
Transit (bus stop improvements, signage, shelters, technology, etc.))	40%
Access Improvement Projects (sidewalks, intersection improvements, studies)	20%
Park-and-Ride Facilities	15%
Operations, Maintenance and Replacement	15%
Discretionary	10%
Total	100%

Town of Carrboro projects would be eligible for funding primarily as access improvement projects. Funding would be used for up to 100% of the cost of small projects (\$300,000 or less) and approximately 52% (on average) of the cost of larger projects, and could be used toward the local match (typically 20%) requirement for state and federal funded projects. Staff presented a preliminary list of projects to the Board of Aldermen on September 17, 2013 and an updated list on April 22, 2014. The list of projects included: the sidewalk on South Greensboro Street, sidewalks and bike lanes on Estes Drive, a sidewalk on West Main between Fidelity and Poplar, a sidewalk on Old Fayetteville Road behind Carrboro Plaza, the Morgan Creek Greenway and a corridor study of Estes Drive.

Timeline

The Staff Working Groups for Durham and Orange counties have been meeting regularly for several months to review the existing plans and consider changes. The plan is scheduled to be released for public comment February 10, 2017 through March 13, 2017. It is expected that GoTriangle staff will present the contents of the draft plan at the February 7th Board of Aldermen meeting. Public drop-in style meetings will be held during late February. GoTriangle is compiling public comments and will share them with local boards for their consideration. If there is interest, the Board may request that GoTriangle present the draft plan once the public comment period has ended.

Target milestones for plan adoption include: the April 4th Orange County Board of Commissioners meeting, the April 12th DCHC MPO Board meeting, and the April 26th GoTriangle Board of Trustees meeting. The complete schedule for all meetings associated with the Transit Plan update is attached. The timeline is designed to provide for the GoTriangle Board to consider entering into a contract for final design with their General Engineering Consultant for the DO LRT project and stay on track with the FTA schedule.

Financial Impact

The financial impacts of the proposed update to the Orange County Transit Plan will be identified in the scheduled release of the draft Plan document in early February. The key issues relate to the trade-offs between funding the major capital projects, bus operations and expansion, and small capital projects. The cost share agreement with Orange County for the DO LRT project may also be revisited.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board receive the presentation on the Orange County Transit Plan, offer comments, and consider recommendations to convey to the DCHC-MPO Board through the Town's liaisons. The Board may also wish to consider requesting a follow up presentation from GoTriangle for a meeting in March.