

ATTACHMENT A

Table of Contents

I. Brand Development / Marketing / Online Presence Summary	
a. Summary of Key Points	Page 1
b. Recommended Timeline	Page 2
II. Brand Development Plan	
a. Situation	Page 3
b. Background	Page 3
c. Approach	Page 3
d. Methodology	Page 4
e. Phase I – Define / Assess and Strategic Planning	Page 5
i. Preliminary Research / Agency Assessment	Page 5
ii. Define Targeted Stakeholders	Page 7
iii. Branding Steering Committee	Page 7
iv. Messaging Development	Page 8
v. Creative Direction	Page 8
vi. Tagline	Page 8
vii. Color Palette	Page 9
viii. Website Framework	Page 9
f. Phase II – Campaign Development	
i. Immediate Need Deliverables	Page 9
ii. Recommendations for Future Deliverables	Page 10
iii. Comprehensive Marketing and Outreach Communications Plan	Page 10
g. Phase III – Implementation	Page 10
h. Phase IV – Branding Project Close	Page 11
i. Logo Concepts	Page 11
III. Marketing Plan Strategies	
a. Marketing Objectives	Page 12
b. Target Markets	Page 12
c. Action Plan 2017-2018	Page 13
i. Strategy I – Awareness and Image Building	Page 13
ii. Strategy II – Community-Based Marketing Program	Page 14
IV. Website Development Strategies	
a. Functionality	Page 15
b. Design	Page 16
c. Wireframe Development	Page 17
d. Monitoring and Updating the Site	Page 17
e. Assessment	Page 18
V. Social Media Strategies	
a. Strategy I – Find the Best Fit	Page 18
b. Strategy II – Schedule Social Engagement	Page 19
c. Strategy III – Create Expert Content	Page 19
d. Strategy IV – Be “Social” on Social Media	Page 20

I. Brand Development / Marketing / Online Presence Summary

This brand development / marketing / online presence strategy document was created as a collaborative effort between the Wake County Transit Planning Advisory Committee, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the Public Involvement Consultant team, which includes the Town of Cary, the Town of Apex, The City of Raleigh, GoTriangle, Wake County, Town of Morrisville and the Town of Knightdale. It is presented to the Wake County Transit Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC) for adoption as guidance to GoTriangle for implementation as the lead agency for the Wake County Transit Plan's public engagement efforts.

A methodical and systematic approach to branding, marketing and website and social media development is recommended. The development of a brand and effective branding strategy will be carried into the development of supporting marketing tools. Once brand development is completed and implemented, development of an effective marketing strategy, a mobile-friendly interactive website and a transformed social media presence will follow.

a. Summary of Key Points

The development of a branding, marketing, website and social media strategy is both a methodical and creative process. Although there are numerous steps and strategies employed in the document key points include:

Brand Development

- Brand identity will be carried into development of marketing tools.
- A holistic, methodical branding strategy will ensure a positive perception of Wake County Transit.
- Assessment of agencies and strategic planning are essential steps in the brand development process.
- A Branding Steering Committee is highly recommended.
- The Campaign Development phase of branding will translate the new brand identity into communication tools.
- The scheduled launch of the new brand identity will take place in mid-2018.
- Assessment and evaluation of brand identity is an essential part of development process.

Marketing Strategies

- Brand development process lays the groundwork for marketing strategies.
- Advertising and public relations strategies are suggested to build the image of Wake County Transit and its partner agencies.
- Community-based strategies are an important and ongoing part of a comprehensive marketing strategy.
- Marketing strategies should include co-branding of all regional services.
- Communication with senior service providers, veterans' assistance offices and other gatekeeper agencies, including a regular newsletter, is recommended.
- Targeted audiences should be identified for specialized marketing and promotional activities.

Website Development

- Comprehensive wireframe development provides a roadmap for website layout and functionality.
- Development of an inspiration board is recommended to inspire website designers and provide guidance toward the look, feel and mood of the website.
- The website should include a more robust framework that will support the new branding and provide opportunities for interactive communication.
- Improved functionality and responsiveness is essential in the development of a new website.
- Monitoring and updating the website is a necessary part of the website development strategy.

Social Media Strategies

- Finding the “best fit” among social media platforms ensures that target audiences are reached.
- Scheduling regular social media posts and interactions ensures active engagement with social media.
- Build a content plan.
- Leverage participating agencies’ social media to the benefit of Wake County Transit.

b. Recommended Timeline

	7/17	8/17	9/17	10/17	11/17	12/17	1/18	2/18	3/18	4/18	5/18	6/18	7/18	8/18	9/18
Brand Development															
Brand Steering Committee Meetings															
Brand Campaign Development															
Brand Implementation															
Branding Follow-up															
Marketing Strategy #1															
Marketing Strategy #2															
Marketing Strategy #3															
Website Design Development															
Website Page Development															
Website Implementation															

II. Brand Development Plan

a. Situation

The initial branding of Wake Transit was initiated by Wake County in conjunction with Wake County's transit providers and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. From this original branding concept, the Wake County Transit Planning Advisory Committee recognized the need to expand upon this basic branding exercise as a move forward in its programmatic implementation of the Wake Transit Plan. This need developed from a recognition that there may be a lack of public understanding of Wake Transit as an overarching umbrella brand and the role it plays in bringing together a number of local partners to deliver a regional product.

Wake Transit does not offer services and is not a formal transit agency. It operates only as an umbrella, or parent brand, encompassing multiple system brands: GoRaleigh, GoCary, Wake County TRACS and GoTriangle. There are options to add more system brands in the future. Wake Transit represents the Wake County Transit Plan, funding for which was approved during the 2016 General Election. Wake County voters approved a one-half cent local sales and use tax referendum. Additional funding for the Wake County Transit Plan comes from Wake County residents in the form of a \$7 vehicle registration tax levied by Wake County Commissioners, as well as a \$3 vehicle registration tax levied by GoTriangle, as the regional public transportation authority.

b. Background

Wake County has more than one million residents with projected growth of 67 people per day. With population growth comes such challenges as congestion, limited parking resources and declining infrastructure.

The Transit Plan establishes the solutions needed to help residents, as well as visitors, get where they need to go more easily. The plan will also provide improved connections within Wake County and across the Triangle region through expanded local and regional bus service, bus rapid transit, and commuter rail service.

c. Approach

To complete the preliminary Branding Strategy for Wake Transit, QCA conducted a preliminary assessment of Wake Transit and the goals for the future. This process began by answering mission-critical, brand-defining questions (pages 8-9), as well as reviewing the current states of the individual regional sub-agencies: GoRaleigh, GoCary, Wake County TRACS and GoTriangle. The process should be continued to allow for talking to customers, employees, individuals representing local service-oriented agencies and elected officials to find out what the Wake Transit brand means to them. The information collected also reflects the community's perception of the Transit Plan. The feedback will be used to finalize the brand identity including the new logo, tagline, color scheme and brand messaging.

Once the brand identity is established, it will be carried into the development of supporting marketing tools. Those tools include promotional videos, brochures and rack cards, a mobile-friendly interactive website and a transformed social media presence. Additional tools will be identified in this Branding Strategy for potential implementation.

The holistic Branding Strategy prepared is one that relates to a diverse array of people, but is more than just a new logo, website and updated marketing communications materials. The Branding Strategy created for Wake Transit will be successful because it develops an identity, transforms community mindsets and opinions and establishes an awareness with the goal of building a positive, trusting perception. Successful implementation of the Branding Strategy will result in increased loyalty and the creation of transit advocates.

Branding influences virtually every activity. A well-defined, well-positioned, strong brand will influence the way the community thinks of Wake Transit's system agencies in terms of the positive brand attributes: quality, dependability, trust, reliability and safety. They will see the Wake County Transit Plan agencies as the regional transit providers for their one-stop, cohesive transportation solution, while continuing to build support for the Transit Plan components. The elements contained in this Branding Strategy will become a process for establishing and solidifying a relationship among all identified stakeholders.

d. Methodology

To position Wake Transit as a strong regional brand leader, employees, customers and members of the community must be part of the **Define / Assess and Strategic Planning** phase. The Communications Team recommend using the Transit Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC), as well as establishing a Branding Steering Committee. The TPAC is comprised of stakeholders including representation from:

- GoTriangle
- CAMPO
- Wake County
- North Carolina State University (NCSU)
- Research Triangle Park (RTP)
- All Wake County Municipalities

The Branding Steering Committee should include representation from:

- Current system agency passengers
- Non-riders
- Goodwill agencies
- Transit-dependent populations
- System agency staff
- Wake Transit Communications Team

The Steering Committee will ensure the end product reflects the needs and goals of the community. The first goal of the Steering Committee is to determine where Wake Transit branding is today and identify opportunities for improvement.

Brand Development will be completed in four phases: Define / Assess and Strategic Planning, Campaign Development, Implementation and Project Close.

e. Phase I – Define / Assess and Strategic Planning

Timeline for Phase 1 – July 2017 through January 2018

The information collected during the **Strategic Planning** phase will serve as a road map for building the Wake Transit brand and positioning it successfully. In this phase the facts and vision are creatively merged to establish the foundation of the brand messaging platform. Tasks to be completed during this phase include:

- Full Market Research / Assessment
- Team Review of Existing Materials such as the Wake County Transit Plan
- Final Determination of Target Stakeholders
- Internal Employee Involvement
- External Community Involvement
- Messaging Development
- Brand Personality / Positioning
- Final Tagline Development
- All Creative Direction
- Color Palette Determination
- Peer Review

i. Preliminary Market Research / Agency Assessment

The following brand-defining questions have been used in branding efforts for other agencies and are recognized to help set the stage for the branding strategy. These questions, along with others determined by the Branding Steering Committee, will help Wake Transit to define the needs and goals of the participating partner agencies and provide a platform for discussion. The answers provided are based on research of Wake County and its residents, knowledge of the transit industry and consultant branding experience.

1. *What is the current tagline?*

Wake Transit is not currently using a tagline.

2. *Is it necessary to stick with the present agency name, logo and corporate identity?*

There is a growing regional recognition for the individual “Go” branding. There is no significant external brand recognition for the Wake Transit name. Renaming the agency is not recommended. Changing colors, redesigning a new logo and developing a tagline are feasible options and preferred by the agency stakeholders.

3. *What type of brand program is currently in place?*

There have been no substantial branding programs implemented focusing on Wake Transit as a strong leader in regional transit delivery. There has been some minor branding promoting the Wake County Transit Plan. GoTriangle is currently delivering the projects in the plan to increase the ability to regionalize transit. The “Go” branding is recognized in Wake County.

4. *What elements can be included in branding?*

- References to action and movement
- Reinforcement of connectivity and partnership
- Elements supporting the agencies’ desire to move forward
- Regionalization

5. *What languages may be prominent?*

- English
- Spanish
- Hindi and other Asian languages

6. *What are some perceptions of Wake Transit?*

- “Invisible divide between east and west Raleigh”
- “Driving a car across Raleigh, the options are slim”
- “Lack of cross streets”
- “Lots of questions unanswered”
- “Change public perception of buses”
- “Won’t work if you don’t make transit look and feel different”
- “Will make us regionally competitive”

7. *What are the key goals of the Wake County Transit Plan?*

- Connecting the region
- Connecting all Wake County communities
- Creating frequent reliable urban mobility
- Enhancing access to transit

8. *What do you want Wake Transit to be known for in the community?*

- Increasing bus service
- Implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Implementing Commuter Rail Transit (CRT)
- Funding local services
- Growing Rural On-Demand Services

9. *What other transportation services need to be considered?*

- Taxi cabs
- Ridesharing services (including Uber and Lyft)
- Autonomous vehicles

10. *What information is currently provided on municipal websites or through individual municipal communication media?*

Current elements supporting Wake Transit include:

- Website
- Transit Plan brochure
- GoTriangle videos
- Individual partner agency sites
- Media coverage
- Twitter and blogs

ii. Define Targeted Stakeholders

The Branding Strategy will be geared toward four distinct groups:

- Current system agency passengers
- Choice and potential system agency passengers
- The community at large
- Decision makers and influencers within stakeholder organizations

iii. Branding Steering Committee

It is recommended the committee meet three times: July, September and December. During these meetings the team should review critical items and make recommendations on messaging, creative direction and website organization. Additionally, the team should communicate regularly via email and Go-To-Meeting webinars.

The Branding Steering Committee should be composed of senior leaders in Wake County Transit's partner agencies, key influencers from gatekeeper agencies, marketing and communications personnel from partner agencies and members

of stakeholder groups, such as veterans' groups, groups representing the disabled, college representatives, and senior citizen groups.

It is also recommended Wake Transit include peer reviewers as part of the Branding Steering Committee. Peer reviewers should represent agencies who have been a part of successful and unsuccessful regional expansions.

iv. Messaging Development

The message is what will define Wake Transit's brand. A component of the overall messaging should be a call to action, encouraging everyone to try transit from anywhere in the region. Additionally voters need to be reminded of what the vote means and made aware of where their money is being spent. The proposed messaging will combine the agencies' missions and the desires of the community. Once approved, the messaging should be built into all communication efforts: marketing, public relations, social media, communications, website, advertisements and public speaking activities.

- Develop a document that outlines the message with supporting points
- Review the document with the Branding Steering Committee and TPAC
- Distribute the document to all stakeholders who may speak about Wake Transit
- Establish a stronger, more focused social media presence and policy
- Make the social media policy accessible

v. Creative Direction

Creative direction is wide open with some exceptions. The team does not recommend a renaming of Wake Transit. Currently there is a lack of understanding as to what Wake Transit means or the role the Wake Transit coalition of participating providers plays within the regionalization process, but this will resolve as the remaining components are implemented. Wake Transit should be distinguishable and assume the role of a parent brand containing multiple existing sub brands. All creative elements should be compatible with the existing "Go" sub-brands. An abstract design with progressive images that elicit more of a "feeling" than a "thing" is preferred. Wake Transit is not a transit service provider.

vi. Tagline

QCA recommends the development of a tagline to be used with the logo for at least one year. The development of a tagline will be an effective way to communicate Wake Transit's value powerfully, succinctly and memorably. It will tie the logo and name together with the brand message. The tagline will be

designed so that it may be used as a stand-alone element or with the logo. It will also dictate the direction of a creative campaign found in the Strategic Marketing Plan. The tagline should support Wake Transit's desire to increase awareness of the Transit Plan's vision to move forward as a regional leader and move passengers efficiently and effectively throughout the region. During development of the messaging tagline and logo, QCA recommends a standard tagline that can be used by each agency. That tagline should be helpful in reducing confusion about the Wake County Transit Plan and its sub-brands.

vii. Color Palette

QCA will develop a gender-neutral color palette for the branding, avoiding colors that fade easily or are too depressing, such as gray, black and brown. It should utilize more modern shades of the colors found within the existing logo and the logos of the system agencies.

viii. Website Framework

A website is a necessary portal of information for the Wake County Transit Plan. Currently there is a website presence at www.waketransit.com. A new website URL address will be implemented for this new website presence. The information is text based and lacking a strong visual element. In this phase the team will design and develop a more robust framework to support the new logo and tagline and to coordinate with the approved color palette. Additional information will be included in the Strategic Website Plan, which is included below.

f. Phase II – Campaign Development

Timeline for Phase II – January 2018 – May 2018

The **Campaign Development** phase will allow GoTriangle, as directed by the TPAC, to translate the Wake Transit Assessment and Strategic Brand Development Plan into tactical communications tools. The marketing items listed in Phase 2 are included in the comprehensive Strategic Marketing Plan.

i. Immediate Need Deliverables

- Refreshed Logo and New Tagline (developed in Phase I)
- Responsive website with Search Engine Optimization
- Enhanced social media platforms
- Wake Transit Identity Package
- Social media policy
- Brand messaging (developed in Phase I)

ii. Recommendations for Future Deliverables

- County-wide brochures and rack cards
- Map development
- Website maintenance and updating
- Social media content development and management
- Wake Transit promotional videos
- Media relations
- Branded promotional products
- Press releases
- Outreach booth graphics

iii. Comprehensive Marketing and Outreach

Communications Plan

Once the Branding Steering Committee has successfully completed Branding, the Communications Team recommend GoTriangle implement community awareness strategies to encourage brand support. Promoting the brand in the community will assist in speeding up recognition and create a groundswell of excitement, generating loyalty. QCA will develop a fully comprehensive Strategic Marketing Plan outlining specific activities the Wake Transit team should accomplish in order to get the biggest bang for the branding buck. The key to success for Wake Transit is to properly and consistently promote the new brand. Additional resources, such as advertising, promotional materials and staff time, may be needed to accomplish the execution.

g. Phase III – Implementation

Timeline for Phase 3 – May through July 2018

Once the Campaign Development Phase is completed and all deliverables and branding plans are complete, implementation will begin. During the **Implementation** phase the brand will be launched internally and externally. One of the key performance indicators of a successful branding effort is gaining consensus with the targeted stakeholder groups and building the brand through involvement and an emotional attachment. The Communications Team recommend implementing the branding through a series of different activities:

- Internal reveal during system meetings
- Relaunching the website to the community
- Social Media promotion in conjunction with the website relaunch
- Production and distribution of community facing materials distributed county-wide

- Community outreach activities
- Speaking Engagements / meetings with key stakeholder groups
- Media Relations (press releases and editorial board interview)
- Coordination with the county public television station

More specific opportunities will be identified in the Comprehensive Strategic Marketing Communications Plan. Strategies for development of this plan are included in III of this memo.

h. Phase IV – Branding Project Close

Timeline for Phase 4 – July through September 2018

It is recommended that a follow-up Assessment / Evaluation be completed by the team within six months from the implementation of the new branding to measure the effectiveness. The Assessment / Evaluation can be completed through a survey distributed digitally to the database of users signed up for alerts – which is a feature recommended to be included in the website, posted on the website and through grassroots community outreach activities, such as passenger surveys. It should be provided to a sampling from the targeted stakeholder groups and should involve the Branding Steering Committee. Additional surveying at select community locations can be used to measure awareness of the general public and the effectiveness of branding efforts.

As a part of Phase IV, the team will also provide Graphics Standards Guidelines to direct the proper use of the new brand identity for all future development.

i. Logo Concepts

An effective logo is distinctive, appropriate, practical, graphic and simple. In its simplest form, a logo is there to identify Wake Transit. To do this effectively it must follow a few basic principles of logo design:

- A logo must be simple. A simple design makes for easy recognition and allows the logo to be versatile.
- A logo must be memorable.
- A logo must be enduring. An effective logo should still be effective many years from now so it is important to avoid trendy symbols or looks.
- A logo must be versatile. An effective logo should be able to work across a variety of mediums and applications.
- A logo must be appropriate to the community it represents and should not cater to or demean any specific group or agenda.

The following concepts are presented as starting points for discussion with the Branding Steering Committee. They are not meant to be final logos or even suggestions for possible logos. They are simply concepts for prompting discussion.



III. Marketing Plan Strategies

Marketing strategies will be developed that build on the branding and leverage it to support Wake Transit’s vision for the future as they continue to grow and connect the community.

The Marketing Objectives of this plan focus on building awareness of Wake County Transit as a combined regional entity; increasing awareness of the “Go” brand as a part of Wake County Transit; developing continued support of the half-cent sales tax as a funding mechanism for Wake County Transit; increasing awareness of transit as a viable option for local residents and visitors; and ultimately to increase use of transit throughout Wake County. The plan targets include workers, seniors, employers, persons with disabilities, college students and visitors to the area. Several strategies will be implemented to reach these audiences.

a. Marketing Objectives

Wake Transit’s core marketing objectives center on a commitment to provide the residents and visitors to Wake County with safe, reliable, clean and connected transportation experiences. With that overarching goal in mind, here are the objectives for this plan:

- Growing Wake Transit’s image in the community
- Increase overall ridership
- Build awareness among riders in the community
- Improve the ease of access throughout the region
- Know that our customers want by generating more customer feedback

- Facilitate customer feedback response and implementation process
- Enhance website to increase knowledge of Wake County Transit Plan and its importance to the community

b. Target Markets

The cooperative agencies that make up Wake Transit strive to make their customers' riding experiences efficient, pleasant and economical. Target markets include, but are not limited to:

- Seniors – 60 years of age and up
- Persons with disabilities
- College students
- Hourly wage service sector
- Economically challenged families
- Motorists on congested regional routes
- Visitors to the area

c. Action Plan 2017-2018

In support of the aforementioned objectives to reach Wake Transit's target markets and with input from TPAC regarding specific priorities, the following marketing strategies are suggested.

i. Strategy I – Awareness and Image Building

This section outlines advertising and public relations strategies to build broader awareness for the Wake County Transit Plan, while positioning regional transit as user friendly and efficient. Once the strategies described in Strategy 1 are in place, an introductory advertising campaign should be implemented to build awareness of Wake Transit and to encourage trial ridership. Wake County residents and visitors are very aware of the issue of traffic congestion. An overall theme will be developed for the initial campaign that introduces the brand and encourages people to try transit.

- Introduce a media advertising campaign to “introduce” the Wake County Transit Plan.
 - Raleigh newspapers
 - Local community newspapers
 - Cable TV
 - Radio
 - Direct mail
 - Movie theater advertising
 - Passenger-facing materials
- Schedule meetings with editorial boards.
 - Local community newspapers

- Newspapers targeting Hispanic populations
 - Student newspapers
- Plan aggressive public relations campaign.
 - Develop proactive news release calendar
 - Develop and maintain media contacts database

ii. Strategy II – Community-Based Marketing Programs

The third set of strategies rely on community partnerships and outreach efforts to achieve the objective of increasing visibility, educating and encouraging ridership by key target populations. Community-Based Marketing Programs includes involvement in activities such as local senior health fairs, career fairs and college orientations. This type of "community-based" marketing has advantages in that it provides an opportunity to target messages very specifically, allows for an exchange of detailed information, creates community partnerships and provides an opportunity for direct feedback from involved stakeholders. All of these programs / strategies will be implemented with local government and stakeholder support.

- Establish gatekeeper communications program.
 - Conduct outreach presentations to major social service agencies at least once a year.
 - Produce and distribute a printed or electronic newsletter for gatekeeper agencies.
- Establish permanent transit information displays.
 - Social service agency lobbies.
 - Community centers.
 - Senior centers.
 - Hospitals and healthcare centers.
 - College unions or community buildings.
- Direct marketing to large commuter groups.
- Increase communications with Hispanic communities.
- Educate social service agencies that work with economically challenged families and workers.
- Market to colleges and college students.
- Market to major employment centers.
- Market to senior populations.
- Speaking engagements.
- Meetings with stakeholder groups.

IV. Website Development Strategies

The internet is an increasingly important source of information for the public. The Wake Transit website currently is informative, but lacks cohesion and strong visual elements. While it is quite functional and provides access to a great deal of information, it is not currently serving as a particularly strong tool for giving the public quick, easy access to information on what Wake Transit is and what the Wake County Transit Plan will do for them. Wake Transit's redesigned

website will be more user friendly and more enticing to visitors. The website needs to tell the story of Wake Transit's mission and how the Transit Plan benefits the region as a whole. The existing website source for transit travel in Wake County and for the Triangle region as a whole is gotransitnc.org. The Wake County Transit Plan website will support information on transit travel in the region and will provide a resource for information on the Wake County Transit Plan.

It is vital to have a strategy prior to redesigning the website. To ensure that the website is effectively meeting the needs of its visitors, it is essential to map out the visitor's journey from the first time they visit the website to the moment they become an involved participant in what the website has to offer. What pages are they most likely to view, what content are they going to read and what prompts will they respond to? This information will all be provided through Google Analytics. Understanding that information will help guide the design of the site and help push casual viewers into becoming supporters of the Wake County Transit Plan.

The following steps must be taken prior to website redesign:

- **Determine your goal** – What is the purpose of the redesign and what outcomes are required?
- **Define your brand** – What is the message of your website? What is the “feel” of the Wake Transit brand?
- **Define your audience** – Who is the target audience? How do we want them to perceive Wake Transit? Knowing your customer / viewer is important in developing an attractive, informative, high functioning website. In redesigning the website it will be important to take what you already know about your area and your potential website visitors to map out your strategy for redesign.
- **Analyze others** – What are other agencies doing? How does Wake Transit distinguish itself with its website?

a. Functionality

The Wake Transit website should be redesigned with the end user in mind. Who is the primary target audience of the website? The mission of Wake Transit, once developed through the branding process, will guide the development of the website and provide direction to the designers toward increasing functionality of the website. Ultimately it should be designed to provide the information users are most likely looking for right up front with minimal searching. The information should be provided in formats that are appropriate for both current and new users to the website.

The redesigned website should be made mobile friendly to allow users to access the most important information on their mobile devices. More than 50% of all web searches start on a mobile device. So, if Wake Transit is not providing an attractive, functional mobile-friendly experience for its web visitors, it is losing interest of more than half of its potential viewers at the onset. For Wake Transit's website to function well, it must include responsive design.

Once a visitor lands on the Wake Transit website it is vital that they know what to do next. They won't know what pages to view or actions to take if the site doesn't provide them with some sort of direction. To increase a visitor's involvement, it is suggested that Wake Transit add calls-to-action. Invite them to do something. Tell them to click here for more information, watch a video or post a comment.

Graphical quick-link icons added to the home page would allow visitors to quickly navigate to the most useful information. The Communications Team recommends adding links to social media to the header section to make them more visible and to increase social media activity.

b. Design

The Wake Transit website should be redesigned with a more robust framework that will support the new branding and will provide opportunities for interactive communication between the TPAC, the participating transit agencies, the riders of the regional transit systems and the public who financially supports the Wake County Transit Plan through their tax dollars. An efficient site will be able to expand along with future technologies and will support public engagement and information for major projects and studies as well as the development of the annual Wake Transit work plans. This website will not provide direct information on routes or how to ride transit, but will provide links to all regional transit providers. The Communications Team suggests developing a website for Wake Transit that is intuitive and easily navigable for both novice and experienced users. It should be dynamic, engaging and built to the latest standards.

The suggested new design for the website should include:

- A new, comprehensive brand and logo.
- The addition of a graphical logo element to the header section.
- Colors that coordinate and follow branding.
- Imagery that accurately reflects Wake Transit – no stock art.
- Typography that is modern, friendly and accessible.
- Page layout that is easy to navigate and inspires people to learn more about Wake Transit and its mission.
- Concise messaging that gets to the point quickly.
- Copy that matches the voice of Wake Transit’s mission and encourages visitors to explore questions and discover answers.
- Pages that are responsive and mobile friendly.
- Calls-to-action that encourage visitors to sign up or connect with social media.

The Communications Team suggests the following changes to the current website:

- Addition of rotating slides on the home page featuring project highlights and directing users to pages containing important content. The slides could potentially include animated elements to draw even more attention from site visitors.
- Removal of the full list of update posts from the home page; replace it with a list of the latest update posts with headlines and short excerpts that could easily be clicked on to read the full post.
- Addition of a photo gallery page featuring photos and images related to the Wake County Transit Plan and its projects.
- Addition of a video gallery page featuring videos related to the Wake County Transit Plan and its projects.

- Addition of separate pages for each Wake County Transit Plan project.
- Inclusion of interactive before / after images and maps that allow a visitor to move a slider across the image to show how the same area looks before and after the project.
- Addition of interactive maps that allow the site visitor to click on various parts of the map to view enlarged details.
- Inclusion of an interactive frequently asked questions (FAQ) page that would make use of an accordion effect so the site visitor can reveal the answer to a question by sliding across the question.
- Addition of an interactive graphic project timeline that allows visitors to click on different elements of the timeline to view details or images.
- Development of a calendar page for events and meetings which could be viewed as a calendar grid. Website visitors could click on an item to get full details including a Google map of the location and an “add to calendar” link.
- Inclusion of a contact form where users can submit questions or comments and receive an email in return.
- Development of a 3D animated flyover video of the different corridors and services that will be enhanced by the Wake County Transit Plan. This can be a very effective tool for showing visitors to the website what changes they can expect in the coming months / years.
- Addition of a dashboard showing Wake Transit Plan implementation progress.
- Addition of archiving to include all videos, photos and community events held prior to the passage of the tax referendum in November 2016

Development of an inspiration or “mood board” is extremely useful for establishing the aesthetic feel of a website and is recommended for development of the Wake Transit website. An inspiration board usually fits into the design process somewhere between wireframe development and design mockups. An inspiration board is suggested prior to redesign of the Wake Transit website as it helps a group, like the TPAC, to explore photography styles, color palettes, typography and the overall look of the site.

c. Wireframe Development

The wireframe is the framework or foundation on which the entire website is built. Wireframe development is a process that is crucial to an end product that is both functional and inviting. The key to an effective wireframe is to keep it detailed enough to guide the programmer, but flexible enough to allow for creative design. Prior to creating the wireframe, the TPAC will need to have a clear understanding of how they want the public to respond to the Wake Transit page. The wireframe is another tool necessary for the TPAC, the consultants and the designer to use in developing the website. Mapping the existing site is another important step. This will involve an inventory of all current site content to ensure crucial information is included on the new site as well.

d. Monitoring and Updating the Site

As the Wake County Transit Plan progresses and new projects and partnerships develop it will be necessary for multiple users to have the ability to update specific projects or pages. It is suggested that the website development process includes a plug-in that will allow for multiple website content administrators. It is recommended that each administrator have restricted access that would allow them to only edit pages and content that fall within their area of responsibility. Sufficient training should be provided to ensure all content administrators are comfortable with their roles. As a part of that training, the team will also provide Website Administrator Guidelines to direct the proper monitoring and updating of the site. The Guidelines document will also ensure a smooth transition from one assigned administrator to another.

e. Assessment

Once a solid website that reflects Wake Transit’s mission and branding has been developed, constant monitoring of how the site is performing is just as important. Once the Communications Team has built a robust, comprehensive website for Wake County Transit, it will be critical to take a step back and sift through the data to assess where website visitors are going and what they are doing when they get there so the group can figure out ways to engage them even more. It is suggested that Google Analytics being employed on a regular basis to analyze this data. Website testing and interactive feedback techniques will also be employed to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of the website.

V. Social Media Strategies

Social Media has become a platform for increasing awareness, building clientele, sharing urgent information and encouraging discussion and interaction. To engage Wake Transit’s target audience on social media and build a following, it is necessary to define the audience of Wake Transit’s social media platforms. Who is Wake Transit trying to reach and why should they engage with you? What is the message Wake Transit wants to share with its audiences? It’s important to define social media audiences and platforms before considering Wake Transit’s strategy.

a. Strategy I – Find the Best Fit

There are hundreds of social media platforms – too many for Wake Transit to possibly employ. The most popular platforms in the United States include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat. Each has its audiences and its uses. Employ the proper platforms to reach the targeted audiences.

- Facebook is the largest network with 1.8 billion active users.
 - 79% of adults who are online use Facebook.
 - 44% of users check Facebook several times a day.
 - More than 30% of users in the United States are between 25 and 54.
 - Facebook allows for sharing of photos, videos and regular updates.
 - Facebook is typically the starting point for users of social media.
- YouTube has more than 1 billion active users.

- Allows for viewing, uploading and commenting on videos.
 - Provides a home for placement of videos that can be linked to website.
- Instagram has 600 million active users.
 - 59% of users check Instagram daily.
 - 32% of adults who are online use Instagram.
 - Instagram is based entirely on photos and video posts.
 - No clickable links to drive traffic to websites.
- Twitter has 320 million active users.
 - 24% of adults who are online use Twitter.
 - Updates are short but can include links.
- Snapchat has 158 million active users.
 - 60% of users are under the age of 24.
 - Perfect site for targeting millennials.
 - Snapchat is highly visual.
 - Snapchat content deletes itself.

Wake Transit’s choice of social media platforms should be determined based on target audiences. The content should give audiences information that they can use and give them a reason to return and share Wake Transit’s content.

Current social media usage appears to be sporadic and lacks a cohesive plan. The website and social media team recommends a social media strategy that includes development of a social media content calendar to direct use of social media that is deliberate and targeted.

b. Strategy II – Schedule Social Engagement

Once Wake Transit determines what social media platforms they wish to focus on, it’s time to determine the ways and frequency with which Wake Transit can engage with users.

- Infrequent interaction is one of the main reasons agencies experience social media failure.
- Those who are most successful in social media know that steady engagement is crucial.
- Target posts toward high-use times.
- Post frequently and consistently.

c. Strategy III – Create Expert Content

Wake Transit’s team needs to create content that people want to talk about.

- Build a content plan.
- Use infographics to share data-based information.
- Seek peer input for content.
- Replicate brand from platform to platform.

d. Strategy IV – Be “Social” on Social Media

The social media team advises that Wake Transit employ social media in an informative, but friendly way. Social media is not so much an opportunity to educate as an opportunity to interact.

- Use conversational tone.
- “Like,” “Share,” and engage with users.
- Leverage social media feeds from Wake Transit participants.
- Question readers for more engagement.
- Maintain presence and respond to questions and comments promptly.

Social media, when used wisely and strategically, can be an important part of Wake Transit’s branding, marketing and website strategy. The team recommends making a social media strategy part of Wake Transit’s overall plan for public engagement.