



NC Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

---

## CAPITAL AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION WAKE TRANSIT PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMO

**From:** Bret Martin, Wake Transit Program Manager, Capital Area MPO

**To:** Wake Transit Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC)

**Re:** Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project Sponsor Designation

The TPAC-commissioned core technical team (CTT) for the fixed guideway corridors major investment study (MIS) has completed its high-level, regional-scale evaluation of alignment and station area alternatives for the bus rapid transit (BRT) component of the study. The CTT and TPAC have reviewed and assessed evaluation framework data outputs for the alignment alternatives associated with the four corridors proposed in the Wake Transit Plan, and the next step in the process of moving the study corridors forward for further implementation is to designate a project sponsor to take on the responsibility of:

- Further developing the corridors into viable standalone projects with independent utility;
- Interfacing with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for any federal grants being pursued; and
- Managing engineering, right-of-way acquisition, construction, or any other subsequent phases of project implementation toward an end of effectuating and operating a BRT service.

In effect, project sponsors absorb an ownership or lead role over certain phases of a project's execution to ultimately bring the project to fruition.

The CTT and CAMPO Executive Board have reviewed a memo from the contracted consultant for the MIS that recommends through supporting justification that the City of Raleigh be designated as the project sponsor for any viable standalone BRT project corridors with independent utility that may be pieced together from the four MIS study corridors (**Exhibit A**). CAMPO has been assigned as the lead agency responsible for administering the process of designating project sponsors for Wake County Transit Plan projects, and the CAMPO Executive Board has been designated as the appropriate authority for effectuating project sponsor designations for the plan's BRT projects.

At the August 15th Executive Board meeting, the Board took unanimous action to invite the City of Raleigh to serve as project sponsor for one or more BRT project corridors, or a combination thereof, that can be pieced together from the MIS BRT study corridors. The City Council of the City of Raleigh responded to the Executive Board on September 4, 2018, with a unanimous vote, to accept the project sponsor designation. With the invitation from the CAMPO Executive Board for the City of Raleigh to serve as project sponsor, it was understood by the Board that one or more viable standalone BRT project corridors or preliminary locally preferred alternatives with logical termini, independent utility, and regional mobility benefits will need to be pieced together from the four MIS

---

study corridors before a final project sponsor designation can be finalized. With the BRT track of the MIS nearing completion and yielding results that suggest each of the study corridors can each stand alone as projects with independent utility, and with the City of Raleigh starting a dialogue with the FTA on how best to advance the study corridors into project development, the formalization and finalization of the BRT project sponsor designation is ripe to proceed. The City of Raleigh plans to move all four (4) of the study corridors forward into project development, with the exact nature of how they will be pieced together to proceed currently under deliberation by the City and the FTA.

The TPAC is asked to consider recommending approval to the CAMPO Executive Board for the City of Raleigh to be designated as project sponsor for one or more BRT project corridors, or a combination thereof, that can be derived from and that includes the full extent of the MIS study corridors, subject to the guidance of the FTA.

# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to identify the appropriate Project Sponsor(s) for the Wake Transit BRT projects. Based on an assessment of potential agencies that may be well positioned to serve as a Project Sponsor for the Wake Transit BRT projects, the recommended Project Sponsor for one or more project corridors, or a combination thereof, that may be pieced together from the MIS study corridors is the City of Raleigh. Following in this memo is an explanation of the justification for this recommendation.

## WAKE TRANSIT PLAN

Wake County voters chose in November 2016 to invest in the Wake Transit Plan with a half-cent transit-designated sales tax. Wake Transit Plan was sponsored by Wake County, with participation from 10 regional partners. The Wake Transit Plan goals included: connecting all Wake County communities as well as the region, enhancing access to transit and provide frequent, and creating reliable urban mobility. The adopted plan recommends both long-range and near-term solutions for the region, focusing on tripling countywide bus service, increasing the number of high frequency routes running every 15 minutes or less, and adding bus rapid transit (BRT) and commuter rail systems within the next 10 years.

BRT encompasses a wide range of tools that can help keep buses on schedule, improve travel speed and make the service more attractive to users. The plan envisions that these tools would be deployed along the following corridors, covering over 21 miles at minimum:

- Western Boulevard between Raleigh and Cary;
- Between downtown Raleigh and the intersection of Capital Boulevard and Wake Forest Road (this short segment would be used by several converging bus routes from the north);
- Between downtown Raleigh and WakeMed; and
- Between downtown Raleigh and Garner

The high frequency improvements are predominantly related to improved service operations, while the high capacity system of BRT and commuter rail projects will require major capital investment in the order of tens of millions of dollars or more. Major capital projects, such as these, that will have lasting impact on the transportation infrastructure and operations within the corridors are common candidates for formal Environmental review processes, as required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). They may also be eligible for federal grants for capital construction. Under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST), state or local government authorities eligible to apply for such capital funding grants are called Project Sponsors.

# 2 Project Development and Project Sponsorship

Project Development (PD) is the general term for the process of advanced planning, preliminary engineering design, environmental compliance review, and execution of critical agreements and permits required to begin construction of major capital investment projects. In the case of FTA Small Start projects, Project Development can also include final engineering design. It is also a locally driven process, having input from members of the community, key agencies, and stakeholders throughout the development and refinement of the project, also known as a locally preferred alternative (LPA).

**Major Transit Investment – Draft BRT Corridor Project Sponsor Justification 8-7-2018**  
**Wake County Transit Plan**

The Project Sponsor is the municipality or agency who is initiating the PD process and taking primary responsibility for the oversight and management of the project, including completing any required environmental compliance. Overall, the Project Sponsor must be able to demonstrate that it has the technical capacity and resources to successfully develop, implement, and operate the BRT program.

**PROJECT SPONSOR CONSIDERATIONS**

The duties of the Project Sponsor will evolve over the course of the PD process as the needs of the project change. The resources that are required at different phases of the project life cycle have common skill sets related to Project Development and Implementation, Operations and Maintenance, or Funding and Administration.

It is ideal to identify a Project Sponsor who has an experienced organization and staff capable of consistently managing the different tasks and activities in these three areas. Some of the many considerations that must be addressed for proposed BRT projects include, but are not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate potential adjustments and relocations with affected utility holders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop procurement packages and execute contracts for design, construction and vehicle acquisition</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate and execute all permits as well as interagency and municipal agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage stakeholders and members of the community for input on needs, goals, and solutions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate potential easements and acquisitions with affected property owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate the programming of local funds to support construction and continued operations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the development community to leverage potential public private partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue outside and innovative funding opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement transit supportive land use policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve design, construction and operating conflicts with partners and stakeholders</li> </ul>

The City of Raleigh is a vertically integrated and well positioned entity to effectively manage all phases and aspects of the Wake Transit BRT program. The City of Raleigh will use the full depth of its departmental resources to implement the BRT program. Key departments and relationships within the City’s organization include, but are not limited to: Engineering Services, Transportation, City Planning, Development Services, Economic Development, Finance, Information Technology, and the office of the City Attorney. These departments are organized within various groups accountable to the City Manager and City Council of Raleigh. In addition, the vast majority of the proposed BRT projects are within the Raleigh City limits.

The following sections outline the general resources and coordinated roles that the Project Team from the City of Raleigh will leverage during the three phases of the project life cycle.

**Project Development and Implementation**

The City of Raleigh Transportation and Engineering Services Departments will be the primary managers of all phases for implementing the BRT projects. The Transportation Department consolidates traffic engineering, transportation field services, parking operations, and highway maintenance, with the public transportation provider (GoRaleigh). Engineering Services is responsible for facility construction management, roadway design and construction, facility maintenance, vehicle fleet services, and stormwater management.

The detailed design of the BRT projects will be managed by staff familiar with transit planning, roadway design and construction, as well as traffic engineering. They have familiarity and experience in coordinating all traffic operations, engineering design, permitting, and construction oversight for large capital projects. They also have direct access to information regarding complimentary bicycle, pedestrian and multimodal projects along the corridors for resource sharing opportunities. As one of the end users and operator, key members of GoRaleigh

staff will work with peer members of these divisions throughout the PD process to ensure the continued operational and maintenance needs of the projects are appropriately provided for.

The management team will also leverage the City's Public Utilities Department and relationships with franchise utility holders to mitigate impacts to existing resources. The City has a long relationship with NCDOT regarding the maintenance and operations of the local roadway network. NCDOT will be a critical partner in the implementation of dedicated transit running ways, deployment of traffic signal priority (TSP) and other intelligent transportation systems, as well as pedestrian and streetscape betterments near the BRT stations.

## Operations and Maintenance

The Wake Transit Plan prioritized a high frequency network as well as BRT improvements in corridors extending outward in the four cardinal directions (North, South, East, West) from the Raleigh CBD. GoRaleigh is the natural end service operator of the BRT program, as all four of the BRT corridors recommended by the Wake Transit Plan are within its service area. It is currently operating 27 fixed routes throughout the city of Raleigh's municipal area.

## Funding and Administration

The 2016 successful referendum authorized the local sales tax rate increase on the citizens of Wake County to pay for the construction of Wake Transit Plan recommendations. The City of Raleigh is the largest urban center in Wake County, and will be contributing the highest percentage of tax revenue to implement the plan among all municipalities in the county. GoTriangle is in charge of levying the new tax, however they will coordinate the administration of revenues with the Project Sponsor (City of Raleigh) to fund the Project Development and implementation of the BRT Program. A formal process has been developed showing how GoTriangle, GoCary, and the municipalities that the BRT lines traverse, will be active partners assisting the identified project sponsor, the City of Raleigh, in implementation.

The annual Wake Transit Work Plan will program and/or budget the local funds generated to support the development, implementation, continued operation and maintenance of the BRT projects, and the City's Finance Department will work to incorporate these funds into the City's budget and administer their use to support BRT projects. The City Manager's Office will utilize its resources in the areas of economic development and community relations, while the Office of the City Attorney represents the City's interests in working with property owners, contractors, private citizens, as well as Federal and non-profit coordination to support the Project Team. These sectors have a great understanding of the most appropriate procurement methods and administrative oversight practices for large scale capital and construction projects.

They are familiar with relevant state and federal funding and contracting practices and will support the Project team with expertise and resources needed to procure professional services, execute agreements and contracts, and pursue creative innovative outside funding opportunities. These departments also have the authority to set policy to support high capacity transit that is critical to its long-term success. Examples of these policies may include but are not limited: land use and zoning, parking, transit oriented development, affordable housing, development incentives, as well as context-sensitive and sustainable design principles.

## 3 Conclusion

The BRT program recommended by the Wake Transit Plan will include several independent BRT corridor projects that will be programmed for implementation and executed by the Project Sponsor, the City of Raleigh. They are the primary public transportation provider to residents and employers in the area, as well as the municipality in which all or the majority of the four of the BRT corridors are located. The City has also demonstrated the ability to work with regional agencies and community members to execute major capital projects critical to the health and

**Major Transit Investment – Draft BRT Corridor Project Sponsor Justification 8-7-2018**  
**Wake County Transit Plan**

vitality of the region. The various departments and divisions have all the resources and technical capacity needed to consistently manage the development and implementation of appropriate high capacity transit solutions for each corridor or any combination of the corridors.