



Wake Transit

Public Engagement
Policy Report, ed.
2018

Wake Transit Bus Plan

GO FORWARD
A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN TRANSIT

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2016, voters in Wake County approved a local ½ cent option sales tax, paired with other local, federal, and state revenues to fund public transit improvements in Wake County. The Wake Transit Plan consists of four big moves: connect the region, connect all Wake County communities; create frequent reliable urban mobility; and enhance access to transit. The Plan will be implemented over the next 10 years, and beyond. The funding for transit projects is slated to continue flowing with additional improvements to the system. With this new funding source, the Wake Transit Plan partners are embarking on an ambitious public investment strategy that will include a tripling of bus service, as well as implementation of bus rapid transit and commuter rail, plus a slate of capital projects designed to support the service investments.

The Wake Transit Plan represents a direct investment by the Wake County community. As such, an integral component of the Wake Transit Plan is active, ongoing participation and engagement from members of the public.

This report is comprised of three main components that make up the Wake Transit Public Engagement strategy overall: the Public Engagement Policy, a Toolkit, and a Guidebook. The purpose of the policy is to establish guiding principles and practices for public engagement related to projects funded through the Wake Transit Plan. The policy adds further clarity to the overarching Master Participation Agreement, which states that projects should have an element of public engagement.

WAKE TRANSIT PLAN GOVERNANCE

As a new funding source, responsibility for implementation of the Wake Transit Plan has been assigned to the governing boards (the CAMPO Executive Board and the GoTriangle Board of Trustees). They are also responsible for approval and implementation of the following Public Engagement Policy (PEP).

The Wake Transit Governance Interlocal Agreement (Governance ILA) established a staff-level advisory committee to coordinate planning and implementation of the Wake Transit Plan, known as the Wake County Transit Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC). The TPAC is comprised of representatives from regional and local governments as well as Wake County transit providers (GoTriangle, City of Raleigh, Town of Cary and GoWake Access) and major institutions. These entities, who were all invited to be signing parties to the Master Participation Agreement, are known as the Wake Transit Partners. The TPAC oversees the development of the Public Engagement Policy. The TPAC assigned hands-on management and development of this policy to a Public Engagement Policy Core Technical Team (CTT). This document was prepared under the direction of the PEP CTT. Information on CTT and TPAC membership may be found in the appendices.

Wake Transit Partners invited as parties to the Master Participation Agreement:

- Capital Area MPO
- Go Triangle, Go Cary, Go Raleigh
- City of Raleigh
- Wake County
- NC State University
- Research Triangle Foundation
- Towns of: Apex, Cary, Holly Springs, Fuquay-Varina, Garner, Knightdale, Morrisville, Rolesville, Wake Forest, Wendell, Zebulon

For Wake Transit Plan implementation, different agencies “sponsor” or “lead” various transit

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projects or transit plan implementation activities, respectively, with the support of other agencies and municipalities in the County. For example, the annual development of the Wake Transit Work Plan (WTWP) is jointly led and managed by CAMPO and GoTriangle; however, the projects in the WTWP may be undertaken by other Wake Transit Partners in a capacity of project ‘sponsor’. Over time, the Partners will continue to implement projects from the Wake Transit Plan both individually and collaboratively.

The following section attempts to:

- 1) Ensure early resource planning and review of anticipated public engagement activities at the onset of a project, and,
- 2) Outline the roles and responsibilities of the project team and Wake Transit partners as it relates to public engagement.

The Master Participation Agreement sets the framework that future projects and operating agreements must include public engagement elements.

CAPITAL FUNDING, OPERATING, AND SPECIAL AGREEMENTS

As directed by the Governance ILA and reaffirmed by the Master Participation Agreement, annual appropriations for operating and capital projects in the Wake Transit Work Plan require capital funding agreements, operating agreements, or special agreements. These project level agreements detail the expectations, roles and responsibilities of all parties. Wake Transit funds cannot be spent prior to execution of an operating, capital, or special agreement by all parties.

Capital funding or operating or special agreements entered into after the approval of this Public Engagement Policy should include the following language:

- **Public Engagement: The project sponsor agrees to follow minimum engagement standards outlined in the Wake Transit Public Engagement Policy.**

REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report is organized into the following three sections: the public engagement policy, the public engagement planning guidebook, and the toolkit. **Please note, the supplemental Guidebook and Toolkit are not part of the approved Policy in order to ensure flexibility in customizing plans to each project and phase of engagement.** Those supplemental materials provide additional detail on how to develop customized project-level and individual phase public engagement plans, as well as a toolkit of public engagement resources.

The **Public Engagement Policy (PEP)** is adopted by the Wake Transit governing boards (the CAMPO Executive Board and the GoTriangle Board of Trustees). It is designed to provide a high-level overview of what the public can expect from public engagement activities associated with the implementation of the Wake Transit Plan, while retaining flexibility in the way individual project teams and agencies carry out their work.

The **Public Engagement Planning Guidebook** is not adopted by the governing boards, rather, it is maintained by the Public Engagement and Communications (PE&C) Subcommittee under the TPAC. The Guidebook provides guidance and detailed suggestions for the development of custom public engagement plans, their implementation activities and performance measures.

The **Public Engagement Toolkit** is also not adopted by the governing boards and is

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maintained by the PE&C Subcommittee under the TPAC. The toolkit provides explanations and detailed information on a variety of tools and techniques that can be used to facilitate public engagement. Some of the tools and techniques included are known to be successful in the Triangle region, while others were generated from best practices in the public engagement industry.

Many of the public engagement requirements included in the Policy and supplemental Planning Guidebook and Toolkit are extracted from the preliminary research, data collection, and analysis conducted as part of developing this report. A more detailed explanation of these preliminary resources can be found in the Appendices:

- Best Practices Review
- Review of Existing Wake Municipalities' and Transit Agencies' Public Engagement Policies
- Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Wake Transit Specific Gaps and Needs Analysis

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I. Public Engagement Policy

OVERVIEW

Trust and credibility are the foundation of effective and authentic public and stakeholder engagement programs. This is especially true when efforts are coordinated across multiple agencies and partners. This Public Engagement Policy (PEP) is intended to provide a high-level overview of what the public can expect from public engagement activities associated with the implementation of the Wake Transit Plan, while retaining flexibility in the way individual project teams and agencies carry out their work.

Though the meaningful engagement of diverse interests may be challenging at times, transportation decisions are ultimately more responsive to local needs as a result of the public participation process. Public engagement provides decision-makers with relevant, applicable information prior to decision-making, and provides the public an opportunity to raise concerns and share perspectives that can be considered with discussion of technical, political and economic issues.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Wake Transit Partners are committed to early and continuous participation by the Wake County community in developing regional transit policies, plans, and services. With this policy, the Partners seek to establish a system that encourages public reflection, reaction and discussion of the wide-ranging and evolving issues associated with implementation of the Wake Transit Plan. Investing in high-quality, meaningful, public engagement from the beginning of projects through to their completion will be paramount to our success.

APPLICABILITY

Requirements included in the following policy are applicable to projects that have a Wake Transit capital, operating, or special agreement, as well as the following items outlined in Section 3.03 of the Wake Transit Governance Interlocal Agreement (Governance ILA). Specifically, the:

- Wake County Transit Work Plan;
- Multi-Year Service Implementation Plan;
- Program Management Policy and Plan for Community Funding Areas;
- Project Prioritization Policy;
- Wake Transit Vision Plan (Multi-Year Vision Plan);
- This Public Engagement Policy; and,
- Any major amendments or updates to the policies and plans listed above.

The TPAC, or its designee, should identify which projects to exempt from this requirement when it reviews the annual draft of the WTWP capital and operating budgets during their development process. Exemptions are described later in this policy. This policy is not intended

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to take the place of the public engagement policies of transit agencies or other partner organizations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide Wake Transit Plan public engagement efforts, including the development of customized engagement plans.

Collaborative

Build trust among Wake County businesses, residents, agencies, government officials and other stakeholders and promote lasting relationships and partnership with the community.

- Maintain transparency and ongoing, two-way, communication by conducting outreach regularly with residents, businesses, key stakeholder/advocacy groups, elected officials and funding partners, groups within the project corridors, and others as pertinent.
- Proactively distribute project information in a clear, comprehensive, open and timely manner with a unified voice to ensure that stakeholders receive consistent communication from all members of any Wake Transit project team.

Inclusive

Engage populations that have been traditionally underengaged in meaningful and community-centered ways.

- This includes minorities, low-income individuals, populations with limited English proficiency and environmental justice populations, communities outside of the core areas of Raleigh and Cary, and others depending on the project's potential impacts and location(s).

Accountable

Honor the community's investment and partnership throughout implementation projects by encouraging, reviewing, documenting and incorporating public and stakeholder input in ways that promote lasting relationships of trust.

- *Documentation of public input should be publicly accessible and shared with both the project team and decision makers.*
- *Regularly communicate back to participants to share updates and information on how public input influenced the project.*

Accessible

Present information in easy-to-access formats and ensure that input opportunities are both dispersed across Wake County and are near any impacted project areas, as well as being reachable by transit, when feasible.

- While not everyone in the community will elect to participate in any given engagement process, it is important that a broad range of potential participants are aware of the opportunity to participate and of the ways they can access information.
- Communicate about projects and components using simple and effective language that the entire community can understand.

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- Communicate in a variety of formats – virtually (on the internet), visually, literally, audibly.

Education

Enhance awareness and understanding of the Wake Transit Plan implementation and individual projects to enable informed engagement and meaningful participation from a wide range of community members.

- Develop and maintain broad public understanding and support of the Wake Transit Plan and associated implementation projects.

Meaningful

Ensure all public engagement has a clear purpose, is relevant, is conducted at the appropriate time, and is intentional.

- Facilitate opportunities to partner with stakeholders and the public through relevant, timely public engagement activities.
- Be flexible and responsive to community needs related to tools and tactics for effective public engagement unique to the Wake County community and the project.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

This policy reflects the diversity of projects and investments associated with implementing the Wake Transit Plan. It is designed so the recommendations are relevant, logical and appropriate, while allowing for the scalability and organization of engagement activities by project type and building upon public engagement requirements associated with other funding sources.

Accordingly, the following engagement expectations and requirements are organized around three different elements of Wake Transit Plan implementation: future updates to the Wake Transit Vision Plan; the annual WTWP; and, more generally, other implementation projects. This policy provides high-level guidance on requirements associated with public engagement planning and execution.

Wake Transit Vision Plan (or Multi-Year Vision) Update

In 2016, Wake County residents voted to fund the Wake Transit Plan, which included a vision and investment strategy for public transportation in Wake County. The Wake Transit Partners are currently working to implement this vision and over time it will need to be updated. Any process to make changes or updates to this multi-year vision should involve the broader Wake County community.

- The Vision Plan Update process is anticipated to take over one year to complete (15-18 months). It should occur every four to five years and completion should align with the early phases of development of the region's long-range transportation plan.
- Public engagement during development of the Vision Plan Update will:
 - Be refined in a discrete public engagement plan specific to the particular update.
 - Be a **collaborative** public engagement process. As such, a steering committee

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made up of community stakeholders shall be convened to review and provide advice and feedback at regular intervals throughout the update process. This is in addition to a project level technical team or working group.

- Occur at multiple times across the various phases of the update process.
 - Include in-person activities across Wake County, and in each town, during each outreach or engagement phase. (Additional guidance can be found in the Guidebook)
 - Include opportunities for online engagement during each phase.
- **Formal Adoption Process:**

The Wake Transit Vision Plan Update will be approved by the Wake Transit Governing Boards - the CAMPO Executive Board and the GoTriangle Board of Trustees.

- Public Comment Period - In advance of adoption by the governing boards, and in addition to the public comment guidelines outlined later in this policy, there should be one joint public comment period open for a minimum of **40 days prior to adoption**.
 - Notice must be posted, at a minimum, on the Wake Transit and/or TPAC website.
 - Public Hearing - The two governing boards should convene one joint public hearing for the Vision Plan update, at least **14 days prior to adoption**.
 - Notice must be posted at least **14 days prior to the hearing** on the Wake Transit and/or TPAC website as well as the websites of both governing boards.
 - Public Comment Summary – The Wake Transit lead agency for public engagement is responsible for providing a public comment summary to both governing boards before they approve or adopt the Update. In advance of, or as part of, the staff report and/or staff presentation, the governing boards will receive a public engagement summary that includes a synthesis of engagement activities, themes or a summary of public input received and a staff response or explanation of how the input influenced the final recommendation before the governing boards.
 - Adoption – Notice must be posted on the websites of both governing boards at least **14 days prior to adoption** by either governing board.
- Following adoption, the project partners should conduct a performance review (“after-action) of the public engagement that took place throughout the process and document outcomes, best practices, and where opportunities for improvement exist. This review may be hosted by TPAC or its designee.

Wake Transit Work Plan (WTWP)

The annual work plan process allocates funding to projects and identifies project sponsors. The Wake Transit Plan partners make these decisions collectively and produce a Draft Transit Work Plan and subsequent Recommended Transit Work Plan each by fiscal year. This work program must be shared and vetted with members of the public each year during the development process,

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before the funding allocations are finalized. The Lead Agency for Public Engagement (as of 2018 this designee is GoTriangle) is responsible for managing public engagement related to the development and approval of the WTWP.

While the broader Wake County community may desire to be involved in the development of large capital projects and key policy decisions, it is generally less interested in participation during the development of detailed annual work plans. The purpose of public engagement related to the WTWP is to make sure that members of the public are aware that the WTWP draft has been released for review and that the opportunity to access the information and provide input exists. The other goal of engagement during the WTWP development is general outreach – to educate the community about accomplishments of the prior year as well as provide information about upcoming, short-term, improvements outlined in the next year’s draft WTWP.

Public engagement activities will:

- Begin following the release of the Draft Wake Transit Work Plan by the TPAC.
- Be a **consultative** process – providing an opportunity to obtain public feedback on the recommendations in the draft work plan. This includes a commitment to provide feedback, in return, to the public explaining how their input influenced the final plan.
- Primarily be in the form of informational outreach which should occur across Wake County, and in each town. As described further in the Toolkit, outreach includes activities beyond in-person engagement, such as the utilization of internet and social media, communication to traditional media, sharing information with local community networks, etc.
- Provide an initial public comment period of at least 30 days before the **TPAC** takes action to send a Recommended Annual Work Plan to the governing boards.
- **Formal Adoption Process:**

The WTWP is ultimately approved by the Wake Transit Governing Boards - the CAMPO Executive Board and the GoTriangle Board of Trustees.

- Public Comment Period - In advance of adoption by the **governing boards**, and following the public comment guidelines outlined later in this policy, there may be one joint public comment period open for a minimum of 14 days prior to adoption.
- Public Hearing - The two governing boards may each host their own, separate, public hearing for the WTWP prior to adoption. At a minimum, notice should be posted on the official TPAC and/or Wake Transit website as well as the website of any governing board hosting a hearing at least **7 days in advance of the hearing**.
- Public Engagement Summary Report – The Wake Transit lead agency for public engagement is responsible for developing the draft WTWP public comment summary to both governing boards before they approve or adopt the item. In advance of, or as part of, the staff report and/or staff presentation, the governing boards will receive a public engagement summary that includes a synthesis of engagement activities, themes or summary of public input received and a staff explanation of how the input influenced the final recommendation before the governing boards.

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- Following adoption, the project partners should conduct a performance review (“after-action”) of the public engagement that took place throughout the process and document outcomes, best practices, and where opportunities for improvement exist. This review may be hosted by TPAC or its designee.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Wake Transit Governing Board Public Comment Periods

- **In addition to the requirements set in this policy for the annual Wake Transit Work Plan and the Wake Transit Vision Plan Update, any other item specifically listed under Applicability at the beginning of this policy** (Multi-Year Service Implementation Plan, Program Management Policy and Plan for Community Funding Areas, Project Prioritization Policy, Public Engagement Policy, and any major amendments or updates to these policies and plans), **that is to be adopted or approved by the Wake Transit governing boards (the CAMPO Executive Board and the GoTriangle Board of Trustees), shall ensure that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment by providing:**
 - A combined (Joint) Public Comment Period - A single public comment period of **at least 14 days** can be provided for the governing boards and the TPAC altogether*. In this scenario, all public comments should be directed to one source, the lead agency for public engagement, who will compile and distribute all comments to the lead agency for the item. (See Roles and Responsibilities under the Coordination and Collaboration section of the Guidebook)
 - Public Notice: At a minimum, public comment periods should be posted on the official TPAC or Wake Transit and governing board websites. The TPAC and/or Wake Transit Plan website should clearly distinguish between items that are coming before TPAC and the governing boards, as well as include information on how to provide input.
 - Public Engagement Summary Report - The lead agency for the item is responsible for providing a public comment summary to both governing boards before they approve or adopt the item. In advance of, or as part of, the staff report and/or staff presentation, the governing boards will receive a public engagement summary that includes a synthesis of engagement activities, themes or summary of public input received and, if known at the time, a staff response or explanation of how the input influenced the final recommendation before the governing boards.
 - Opportunity for In-person Public Comment – Any meeting of a governing board where board action is anticipated to occur on an “Applicable” item shall provide an opportunity for the public to speak to the item before action is taken by the decision-making body.
 - Public Notice: At a minimum, notice via meeting agenda should be posted on the official TPAC or Wake Transit and associated governing board website at least **7 days in advance of the meeting**. The TPAC and/or Wake Transit Plan website should clearly distinguish between items that are coming before TPAC and the governing boards.

** While it would be ideal to end the single public comment period before the TPAC acts to*

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recommend an item to the governing boards, it may not always be feasible and therefore is not a minimum requirement. (The TPAC is not required to hold public comment periods or public hearings during their process of providing advice or recommendations to the governing boards.)

Project-Level Public Comment Periods

For independent public comment periods occurring as part of the public engagement for a project, **the project sponsor can establish the length, tools, and tactics necessary**. Public comment periods that are incorporated into a project's public engagement processes do not have official requirements under this policy.

Other Wake Transit Implementation Projects

The individual pieces of the Wake Transit Plan include changing and updating existing bus services; development of new transit service types (i.e. bus rapid transit and commuter rail); and capital investments in passenger amenities, vehicles and technology (among others). Because implementation takes place over the course of multiple years, public engagement activities will also be ongoing. The scale and effort required over the lifetime of each project, and during each phase of engagement along the way, will vary according to the anticipated level of public influence and the requirements of other funding sources (if any).

Typically, any project that has a Wake Transit capital, operating, or special agreement should develop and implement a customized public engagement plan to be reviewed by TPAC, or its designee, as part of receiving funding. Project sponsors developing new projects with funding from the Wake Transit Plan should reference the Public Engagement Planning Guidebook for detailed expectations about developing a public engagement plan.

Exemptions

Not all projects receiving funding will need public engagement or a plan showing how it will be deployed. Exemptions should be determined by the TPAC. The TPAC, or its designee, should endeavor to identify which projects to exempt from this requirement during the development process for the annual draft of the WTWP capital and operating budgets. Project sponsors may also submit an exemption request to the TPAC, or its designee, or to CAMPO TPAC Administration staff. Project sponsors may need to do more than what is minimally required in their organization's established policy or plan based on the unique nature of individual projects and to ensure a holistic coordinated effort across Wake Transit implementation.

- ✓ If agencies already have a Federal Transit Agency (FTA) approved service change policy and associated public engagement plan, which will apply to most bus operating projects, they should be submitted for review, and anything additional that may be needed based on the unique nature of those projects can be recommended by the subcommittee.
- ✓ For large capital projects that receive federal funding, there will also be federal National Environmental Policy Act public engagement plans or process requirements that can be submitted for review, and anything additional that may be needed based on the unique nature of those projects can be recommended by the TPAC, or its designee.
- ✓ Projects budgeted to begin in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, before adoption of this policy, with public engagement activities that are already scoped.

Other Local, State, and Federal Requirements

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While the Wake Transit Plan will raise significant resources locally, it is also designed to leverage external funding, including federal and state resources. In cases where other local, state, or federal funds are used, public engagement activities will also be governed by the requirements associated with these funding programs, the majority of which are set by federal statute. All public engagement plans developed should adhere to relevant federal and state guidelines. The federal, state, and local requirements for public engagement may be found in the appendices.

UPDATES TO THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY, PLANNING GUIDEBOOK AND TOOLKIT

As with most plans and policies, the Public Engagement Policy will need occasional updates to ensure the document stays current with best practices as well as state, federal, and local requirements. Updates are also useful as staff changes and the Wake Transit Plan Partners gain more experience executing and managing public engagement strategies related to implementation for the Plan across Wake County.

It is anticipated that this policy will guide the public engagement for the initial Wake Transit Vision Plan Update process. Following the initial Update, before future Wake Transit Vision Plan Update processes begin, the Wake Transit Plan partners, through the TPAC, shall endeavor to reconvene to update the Public Engagement Policy. The Planning Guidebook and the Toolkit will be administratively maintained with oversight by the TPAC.

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List of Acronyms

ACS - American Community Survey
ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act –
AN Advance Notification
App - An application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device
CAC - Citizen Advisory Council
CAMPO - Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
CAP - Community Awareness Plan
CE - Categorical Exclusion
CEQ - Council on Environmental Quality
CFR - Code of Federal Regulations
CMT - Communications Media Technology
CTT - Core Technical Team
DOT - Department of Transportation
EA - Environmental Assessment
EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
EJ - Environmental Justice
EPA - Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA - Federal Highway Administration
FTA - Federal Transit Administration
GIS - Geographic Information System
ISTEA - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
LAPE - Lead Agency for Public Engagement
LEP - Limited English Proficiency
LRTP - Long Range Transportation Plan
MAP-21 - Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century MOT Maintenance of Traffic
MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP - Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act
PDF - Portable Document Format; a file format used to present documents in a manner independent of application software, hardware, and operating systems
PE - Public Engagement
PEP - Public Engagement Policy
PIP - Public Involvement Plan
PIO - Public Information Officer
PIPM - Public Involvement Performance Measurement
PM - Project Manager
PSA - Public Service Announcement
ROW - Right of Way
SAFETEA-LU the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
STIP - State Transportation Improvement Program
TEA-21 - Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century
TIP - Transportation Improvement Program
TPAC - Transit Planning Advisory Committee
USC - United States Code
WTWP – Wake Transit Work Plan (annual)

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APPENDIX B
Federal, State, Other Requirements

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