

Introduction

Purpose of Chapter

The overall goal of the *2035 LRTP* is to promote an efficient and effective transportation system for all users in the RFATS Study Area including the planning and delivery of a safe and accessible public transportation network for all users.

Transit serves two types of users: captive riders and choice riders.

- Captive riders do not have access to or the ability to use a personal vehicle. Transit options for them are essential. These riders include persons too young to drive, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and those without the financial means to own and operate a personal vehicle.
- Choice riders otherwise have access to a personal vehicle but instead choose to use transit. These riders include persons who decide not to own a personal automobile and those who decide to use transit for work, social, medical, or personal trips. Reasons choice riders use transit include saving money, convenience, comfort, or environmental principles.

Due to the geographically spread out population distribution within the RFATS study area, convenient and reliable transit service has historically been difficult to adequately provide. To encourage transit use and decrease dependence on the automobile, a safe, comfortable customer delivery system with attractive and convenient amenities must be developed around public transit stops. This delivery system requires a network of sidewalks, safe street crossings, and lighting because most regular transit users walk or bike to and from any given stop. The efficiency of transit also depends on an interconnected system of roads and highways suitable for public transit. For these reasons, transit cannot be considered in isolation, and the strategies presented in this chapter support improvements to the larger transportation system.

This chapter provides the public transportation element of the RFATS 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), covering local transit, inter-city bus services, and inter-city or commuter rail services. It excludes public transportation by air, which is covered in the Aviation Element. It describes the existing conditions and trends at the national level, at the statewide/regional level, and within the RFATS Study Area. Concurrently, it describes the current and future issues, at the same set of levels. Stakeholder

input is summarized, followed by a review of key points and a list of recommendations.

Relevance to the Transportation System and the Plan

Public transportation has several roles in the transportation system. At the personal level, it provides mobility for people who are unable to drive and an additional mobility option for people who prefer not to drive. At a more strategic level, it can contribute to economic competitiveness, provide an alternative to congested highways, and assist with meeting air quality and other sustainability and quality-of-life goals.

Historically, public transportation has taken a low profile in long-range planning, with greatest attention and funding being given to highway projects. This will need to change as it is increasingly recognized that a highway-led approach is neither financially feasible nor the best way to achieve a region's overall goals. In particular, transit can help tackle issues of highway congestion and air quality. However, land-use patterns are an important determinant of whether transit service can be made attractive or even feasible. It will therefore be important to ensure that development policies and site design also work in harmony with the transportation goals.

Currently, the RFATS Study Area does not have a fixed-route public transportation system serving *local* community needs, although some services exist (including express bus service to Charlotte). Several recent planning efforts have studied how services can be increased.

Existing Conditions and Trends

National Conditions and Trends

At the national level, public transportation fulfills a small proportion of total travel demand, but remains important in particular geographic markets (mainly large cities) and for particular segments of the population (including people with low incomes and people with disabilities).

Across the nation, people agree they would be more likely to use transit if service was fast, frequent, dependable, and easy to use. While such criteria requires a complete system of roads, sidewalks, and bikeways, transit also must provide connections to the places people need to go at a time when they need to get there. As a result, transit must be introduced or expanded within a framework of transit-supportive urban form.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), signed into law July 2012, includes increased focus on several important goals, including safety, state of good repair, performance, and program efficiency. MAP-21

gives the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) significant new authority to strengthen the safety of public transportation systems throughout the United States. The act also puts new emphasis on restoring and replacing our aging public transportation infrastructure by establishing a new needs-based formula program and new asset management requirements. In addition, it establishes performance-based planning requirements that align Federal funding with key goals and tracks progress towards these goals. Finally, MAP-21 improves the efficiency of administering grant programs by consolidating several programs and streamlining the major capital investment grant program known as “New Starts,” which awards grants on a competitive basis for major investments in new and expanded rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) systems.

The current economic situation and increasing concerns about energy independence and sustainability are leading to increasing recognition of the potential role of public transportation. However, it is still not yet clear whether the national political scene will respond to this with a genuine shift in focus from highways to public transportation.



Local Transit

At the day-to-day level, the combination of increased ridership and volatile fuel prices is currently a strain on some agencies, with a struggle to maintain service levels at a time when increased service levels is a goal. The current economic situation is putting additional strain on the traditional funding sources, particularly gasoline taxes and municipal general funds.

Transit ridership has been increasing slowly in recent years, for a variety of reasons including highway congestion, several recent spikes in gasoline prices, and the construction of new light rail and commuter rail systems in some cities. There is also an increasing focus on moving beyond the traditional transit-dependent ridership to capture new riders who choose transit over driving (‘choice riders’).

Most funding for major construction projects comes through the federal government, and here pressures are also being felt. The trend is now turning against major projects in favor of smaller, more easily-implemented projects and those with a relatively low percentage of federal funding. Bus-based projects, particularly Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), are currently the major beneficiaries of this trend.

Inter-city Buses

The national picture for inter-city bus services is likely to be relatively stable. Ridership may grow or fall depending on economic conditions, highway congestion and the price relationship between air and bus travel.

Inter-city bus service is provided mostly by Greyhound, its subsidiaries and its business partners. Other firms also operate in some markets. Together these services provide a nationwide city-to-city network, including stops at smaller locations that are not served by either air or rail. They are widely recognized as an affordable option for long-distance travel. In the past few years, Greyhound has restructured many of its service patterns to concentrate on main flows and make fewer stops. Generally the result has been an increase in ridership with a decrease in vehicle miles. However, some smaller communities have lost their inter-city transit connections as a result.

Inter-City and Commuter Rail Services

Inter-city passenger rail service is provided by Amtrak, an arm of the Federal government. Outside the northeastern US, the services fall into two kinds: long-distance services, often running once a day, and shorter-distance 'corridor' services, often with several trips per day and usually supported financially by states. Amtrak mostly operates over track owned by freight railroads ('host' railroads). Amtrak does not cover its operating costs; both service levels and long-term capital investment planning are hampered by perennial pressure on the Federal budget. Nevertheless, Amtrak ridership has been increasing in recent years on both long-distance and corridor services. There is also an increasing political recognition of inter-city rail's potential contribution to energy independence, offering an alternative to highway congestion, and providing resilience in the event of disruption to civil aviation.

Commuter rail services have become increasingly common in major metropolitan areas in recent years, and there is now considerable experience of implementing these services on existing railroad corridors, in some cases shared with existing freight services. Typically these new services are operated by local or state agencies as a part of the regional transit system, rather than by Amtrak.

On the financial side, a recently-introduced Federal matching-grant program is beginning to offer additional funding opportunities for incremental improvements. On the operational side, however, practical hurdles remain: additional passenger service on existing routes, or service on new routes, is still dependent on either using a government-owned corridor or reaching agreement with a host railroad. The same applies to commuter rail service.

A step-change in inter-city rail service could come from the development of a national high-speed passenger rail network, similar in scope to the interstate highway system, and similar in concept to the high-speed rail networks already in place in other advanced nations and being planned in California. This idea has been gaining increasing acceptance since 2008, but is still no more than a broad aspiration and is not yet a part of federal policy.

The main prospects for higher-speed rail therefore involve utilizing the high speed passenger rail corridors designated by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) since 1992. These corridors envisage substantial incremental upgrades on (generally) existing railroad corridors. Although there is not, as yet, a funded national program for the actual construction of high speed rail passenger corridors, funding has been provided for studies. The degree of development of these corridors is highly dependent on involvement by individual states.

Statewide Conditions and Trends

Local Transit

The 2008 South Carolina Multimodal Long Range Transportation Plan recognizes the value of public transit, and acknowledges that transit ridership in South Carolina has been growing in recent years. However, it recognizes that establishing, financing and sustaining effective transit service in the state's urban areas continues to be a challenge. It also recognizes that there are currently unmet needs, particularly for urban transit, and that the needs will have grown substantially by 2035. State funding for transit in South Carolina is restricted to 0.25 cents per gallon from motor fuel taxes. This generates approximately \$6 million per year for the entire state, which is not even enough to leverage the full amount of potential Federal funding. Nevertheless, the plan concludes that the future "holds promise for public transit in South Carolina." The Plan's Statewide Transit Vision and Action Plan includes a range of aspirations for improving transportation, including the hope of increasing state funding of public transit to \$35 million annually by 2030.

Inter-city Buses

South Carolina remains part of the national Greyhound network. Services and schedules change from time to time. The statewide and regional picture for inter-city bus service is likely to reflect the national trends.

Inter-City and Commuter Rail Services

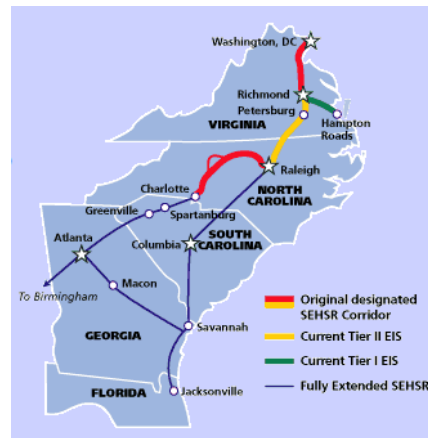
Most of South Carolina's Amtrak service only serves the state incidentally, as trains pass through the state. The State makes no contribution to the capital or operating cost of the Amtrak service.

There are currently no passenger rail services within the study area. The nearest Amtrak stations are Charlotte NC, Gastonia NC, Camden SC and Spartanburg SC. In Charlotte, the station is due to be relocated to a new downtown intermodal center within the next few years. These stations are currently served by the following trains:

- *The Crescent* (serving Spartanburg, Gastonia and Charlotte) – a long-distance service between New York and New Orleans. One train each way, daily. Other key destinations en route include Atlanta, Georgia and Birmingham, Alabama. The schedule for this service is determined by the main points on the route, and so the timings at stations near the study area can be inconvenient; currently the train calls at these stations during the night in both directions.
- *The Silver Star* (serving Camden) – a long-distance service between New York and Miami. One train each way, daily. Other key destinations en route include Savannah and Orlando. The schedule for this service is determined by the main points on the route, and so the timings at stations near the study area can be inconvenient; currently the train calls at these stations during the night in both directions. (Additional services between New York and Florida operate through the eastern part of the state via Florence and Charleston.)
- *The Carolinian* (serving Charlotte) – a long-distance service between Charlotte and New York. One train each way, daily. This is potentially the most useful service for rail passengers living within the study area, as it offers daytime service between Charlotte and the mid-Atlantic states. This train is supported financially by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).
- *The Piedmont* (serving Charlotte) – a short-distance ('corridor') service between Charlotte and Raleigh. This service is supported financially by NCDOT. There are currently two trains each way, daily, an increase from the one offered at the last update of this LRTP.



Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR): One arm of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR) runs to the west of the study area, broadly shadowing the Norfolk Southern (NS) main line and I-85. SEHSR is one of five high speed passenger rail corridors designated by USDOT in 1992. The corridor was originally designated as running from Washington, DC through Richmond, VA and Raleigh, NC to Charlotte, NC with maximum speeds of 110 mph. It is part of an overall plan to extend service from the existing high speed rail on the Northeast Corridor (Boston, Massachusetts to Washington, DC) to points in the Southeast. Extensions designated in 1998 included an extension from Charlotte through Spartanburg and Greenville, SC to Atlanta, GA and on through Macon, GA to Jacksonville, FL. It is this extended corridor that passes close to the study area. There are no firm timelines for implementation on any segment.



In the SEHSR corridor, the technical and environmental studies are proceeding broadly from north to south. Although some technical work has been undertaken for the Raleigh-Charlotte segment, the environmental process for that segment has not yet started. The initial technical work suggested that high-speed service could be extended from Charlotte (Downtown) station to a new station (and servicing facility) at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

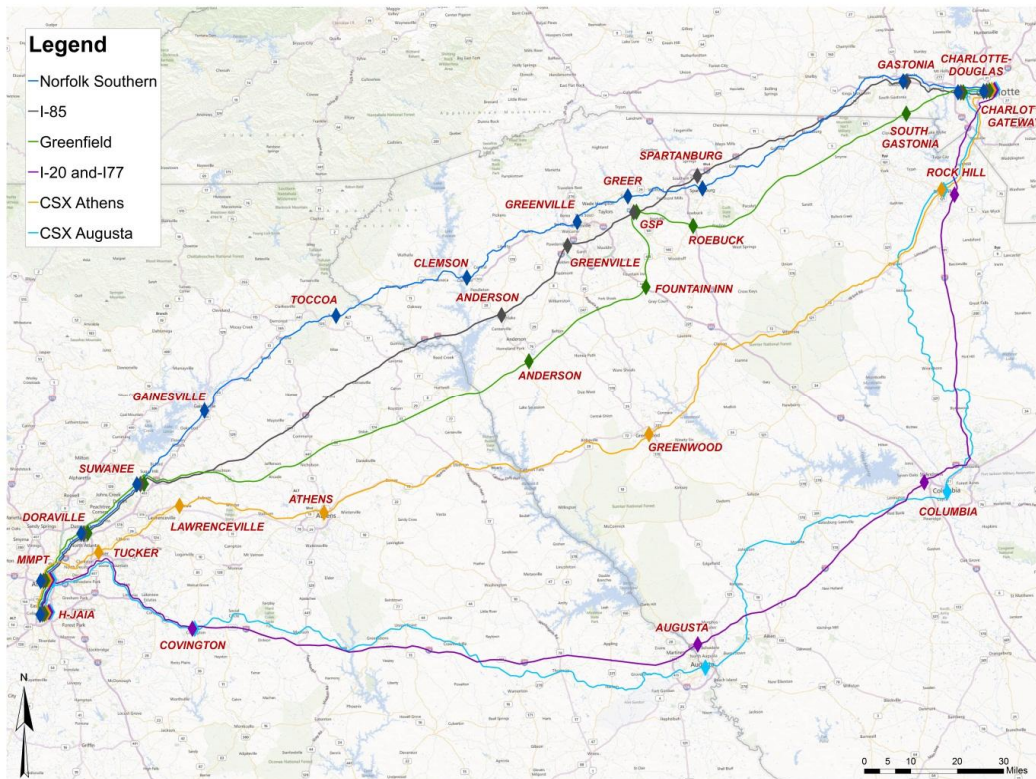
For the segment south from Charlotte, the Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina Departments of Transportation are continuing to evaluate the overall suitability and costs of developing high speed passenger train service.

A 2004 report¹ evaluated the prospects for the Macon-Atlanta-Charlotte section. It assumed that existing lines would be upgraded. Stations would be provided at Greenville, Gastonia and Charlotte, with a possible additional station at Charlotte Douglas International Airport. The report concluded that the Charlotte-Macon corridor was a rapidly growing area and had very good market potential for high-speed rail services. However, the extensive curvature of the line through the hilly terrain meant that even with tilting trains and significant spending to straighten curves, speeds of 90 mph could be reached on less than 10% of the line, and the average speeds could only be 60-72 mph. This would limit the attractiveness of the service, and would give

¹ Macon-Charlotte Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor Plan - Final Report (Georgia Rail Consultants, 2004)

little potential for it to be self-supporting. The states would be expected to provide annual operating assistance, as North Carolina and several other states already do for particular routes. However, South Carolina does not have a source or history of operational subsidies for rail services. The report warned that a high-speed rail service attractive enough to cover operating costs would require major new sections of separate alignment, capable of speeds above 125 mph.

There are six potential routes for the Atlanta to Charlotte Passenger Rail corridor may take including three shared use alternatives: the Norfolk Southern (NS) railroad corridor (also referred to as the Southern Crescent Corridor route); the CSX Transportation (CSX) right-of-way between Atlanta and Chester, SC via Athens, GA and NS right-of-way between Chester and Charlotte via Rock hill, SC; CSX right-of-way between Atlanta and Augusta and NS right-of-way between Augusta and Charlotte via Columbia; two interstate alternatives: the I-85 corridor and the I-20 and I-77 corridor, and a Greenfield corridor which offers the opportunity to define a fully grade-separated route alignment which has optimal geometric characteristics for high-speed passenger rail service. Some of these corridor alternatives were previously defined as a result of a 2008 Feasibility Study.



Statewide Transit Plan: The 2008 Statewide Transit Plan (a component of the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan) identifies the Charlotte to Columbia axis, passing through the study area, as a potential future high speed rail corridor. However, this is not federally designated and should be seen as a very distant prospect. The Plan also refers to possible commuter rail in the Rock Hill to Charlotte corridor.

Statewide Rail Plan: A statewide rail plan was completed in 2009. This plan is a component of the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan. It also cites a current study conducted by Volpe was predicated upon development of a dedicated track for the high speed rail service rather than use of existing freight trackage. A dedicated track was selected for reasons of safety, reliability, and maintenance, as well as operating and access control. Demand and associated revenue along with capital, maintenance and operating costs were developed for each scenario. The study concluded that the “best case” scenario is either 125 or 150 mph diesel power trains with total capital costs of \$2.06 to \$2.52 billion with revenue-cost break-even in 2031 or 2032. Next steps include a more detailed ridership study, further investigation into the best operating speed-ridership-construction cost scenario, and to obtain funding for environmental studies.

Conditions and Trends in the RFATS Study Area

The existing transit services in the RFATS study area are:

- A Charlotte Area Transit Service (CATS) express bus, route 82X, from downtown Rock Hill to downtown Charlotte,
- feeder bus services connecting to the Charlotte light rail line,
- vanpool sponsored by CATS, and
- a demand-response transportation service.

These are described in more detail on the following pages.

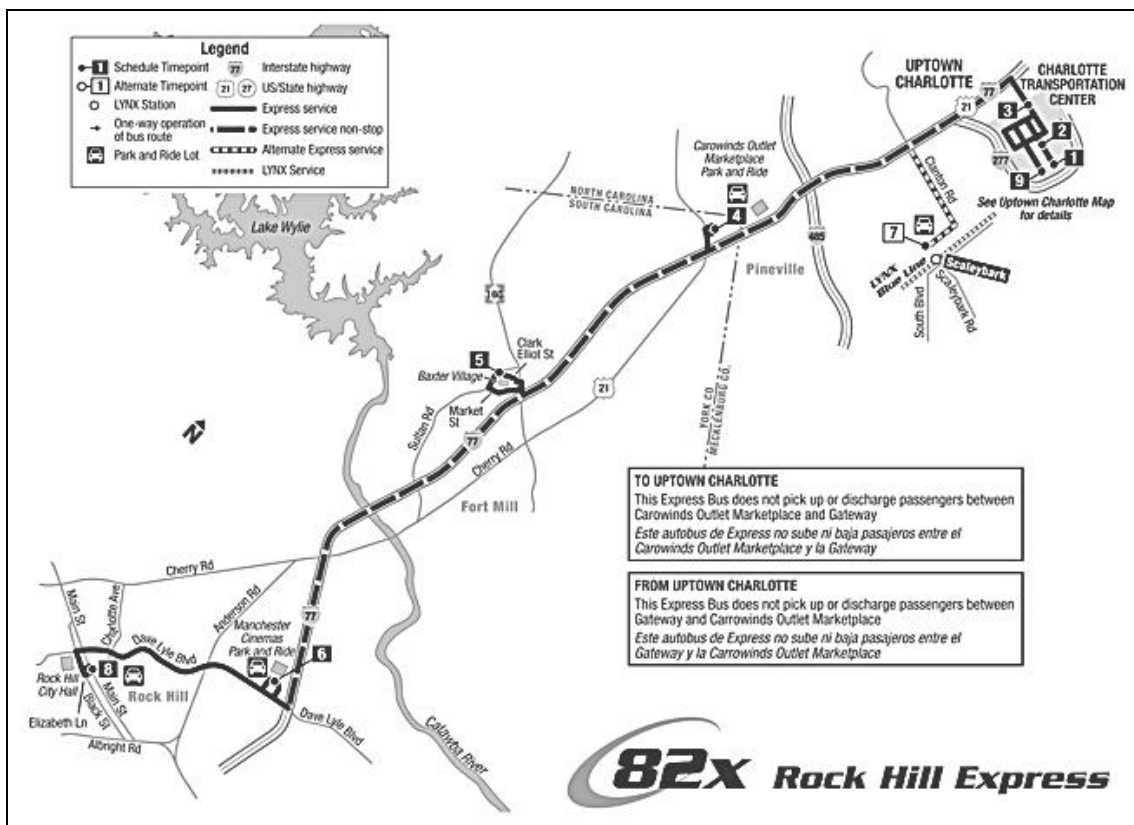
Charlotte Express Bus Service

The CATS Express Bus Route 82X runs at peak hours on weekdays, connecting downtown Charlotte with several stops in the RFATS Study Area (**Figure 8.1**):

- Rock Hill Park and Ride lot in downtown Rock Hill,
- Manchester Cinemas (a park-and-ride lot adjacent to I-77),
- Baxter Village in Fort Mill, and
- Carowinds Area Fiesta Market.

The aim is to provide the community within the RFATS Study Area with commuting options to jobs in Charlotte. The service is funded by a cost-sharing arrangement between CATS and RFATS.

Figure 8.1 - CATS Express Bus Route 82X



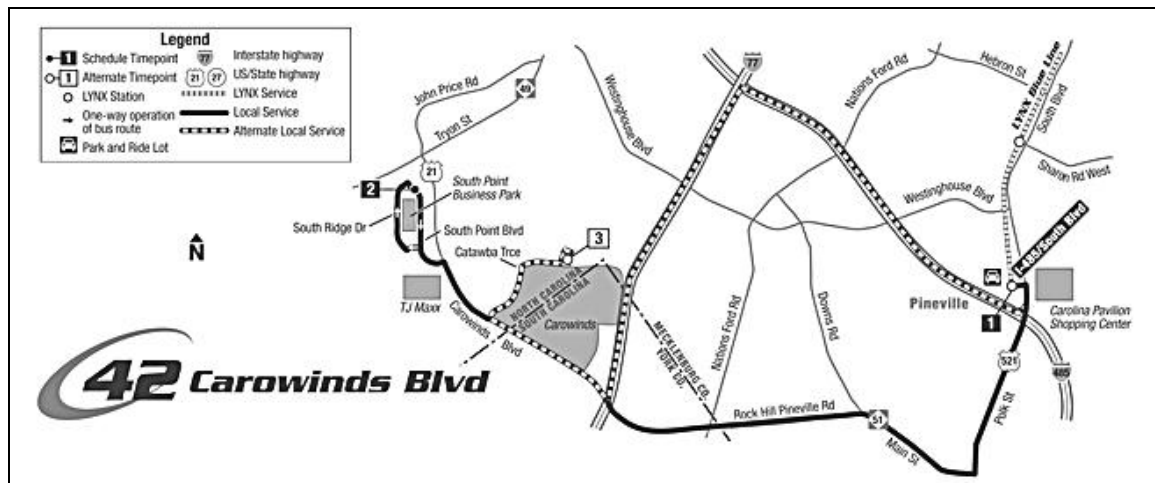
Source: CATS online schedules. Correct at time of preparation, December 2008

Lynx Blue Line Feeder Bus Route

One CATS bus route connects the RFATS Study Area to Charlotte's light rail line (the Lynx Blue Line). It operates during weekday peak periods only. Route 42, as it is commonly called, connects Carowinds Boulevard to the I-485 light rail station (**Figure 8.2**).



Figure 8.2 - CATS Bus Route 42



Source: CATS online schedules. Correct at time of preparation, December 2008

CATS Vanpool Program

CATS sponsors a vanpool program. The aim of vanpool programs is to allow commuters to ride together in a van, particularly in areas where public transportation is not provided. One rider is the designated driver, and CATS covers the cost of insurance, fuel, maintenance, and a Guaranteed Ride Home program. The vanpool program currently offers minivans (for four to seven passengers) and vans (for up to 15 passengers). Several vanpools currently operate within the RFATS Study Area.

York County Access

York County Access is a demand-responsive service providing public transportation for residents of rural York County and the Rock Hill Urbanized Area. It is a cooperative effort of York County and the City of Rock Hill, and is operated by York County Council on Aging.

The service is available on weekdays between 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Rides must be scheduled two days in advance. The service is primarily for seniors, disabled people and clients of federal social programs. However, service to other riders is provided on a space-available basis.

It should be noted that Fort Mill and Tega Cay are not in the Rock Hill Urbanized area. Therefore, residents in those areas are not served by the York County Access system, or any other demand-response system.

Lancaster Area Ride Service (LARS)

Similar to the York County Access, the Lancaster Area Ride Service, or LARS, operates on an as-needed basis serving area residents' non-emergency medical transportation needs. Funded by the J. Marion Sims Foundation, and operated by Lancaster County and the Lancaster County Council on Aging, it fills the gap for those citizens who do not qualify for Medicaid, yet do not have the transportation necessary for medical appointments- especially preventative care and treatment of chronic diseases.

Although this service is not free, it is very affordable and offers a safe, secure, and dependable form of transportation to improve the quality of life of county residents who were underserved prior to the implementation of this dial-a-ride system.

Inter-City Buses

Recent trends resulted in the elimination of the Rock Hill service historically offered by Greyhound. The closest available service offered by Greyhound is in the neighboring communities of Charlotte, NC and Spartanburg, SC.

Inter-City and Commuter Rail Services

There are currently no plans to provide inter-city rail service within the study area. Most likely, Charlotte will remain the main access point for citizens within the study area to reach the inter-city rail network. This will require attention to the ability to reach Charlotte by transit.

It might be possible to ultimately provide inter-city service by extending the Raleigh-Charlotte Piedmont corridor service from Charlotte to Rock Hill along the NS track. This would require detailed study, but would almost certainly need upgraded infrastructure as part of any agreement with the railroad.

There are currently no plans to provide commuter rail service within the study area. However, the Statewide Transit Plan (2008) identifies the Rock Hill to Charlotte corridor as having potential for commuter rail. On this corridor, the MPO recently adopted a bus rapid transit (BRT) proposal as

described in this section. However, commuter rail service could remain a long-term aspiration, either replacing or supplementing the BRT service.

Transit Service Master Plan

In 2007, RFATS completed a Major Investment Study, the Rock Hill-York County-Charlotte Rapid Transit Study (the 'RYC Study'). This examined the connections from the RFATS Study Area to Charlotte. However, a key result of that study was the adoption of a Transit Service Master Plan (**Table 8.1** and **Figure 8.3**). This drew on a range of transit infrastructure and service proposals that had been made in previous studies, as well as the proposals from the rapid transit study itself. The Master Plan therefore provides an integrated set of transit proposals that together would meet a wide range of transit needs within and to/from the RFATS Study Area.

The Transit Service Master Plan includes recommendations from the following studies:

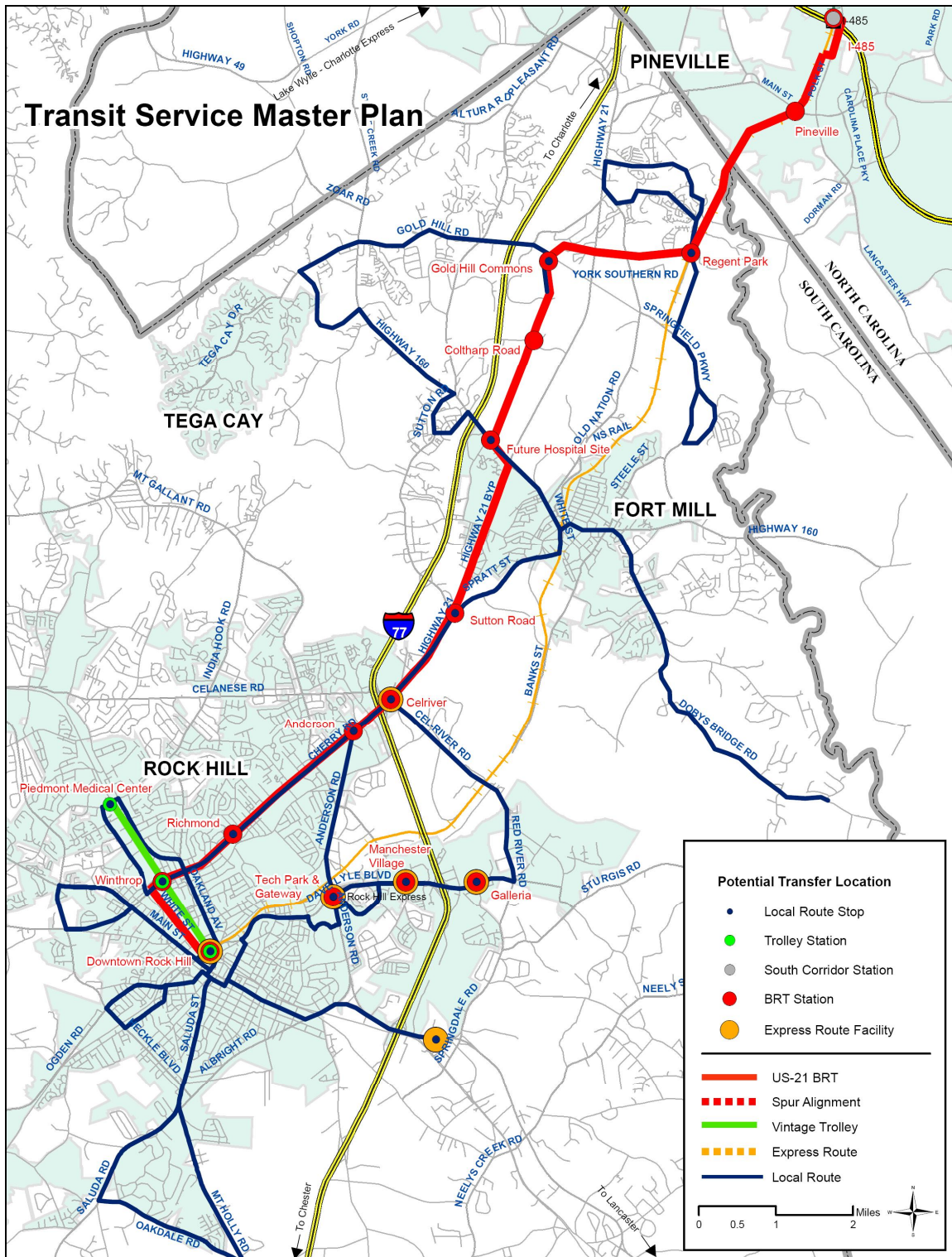
- Rock Hill-York County-Charlotte Rapid Transit Study (2007)
- Textile Corridor Master Plan (2003)
- Needs and Potential for Coordination of Public Transit Services in the Catawba Region, (2004)
- Rock Hill Urban Area Transit Implementation Plan (2005)

Table 8.1 - Transit Master Plan Service Descriptions

Route Name	Type	Hours of Operation	Headway (minutes)	
			Peak	Off-Peak
Rock Hill East	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	30	30
Rock Hill West	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	30	30
Rock Hill - Fort Mill	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	45	45
Regent Park Station Feeder	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	30	30
Gold Hill - Tega Cay - Baxter - Fort Mill	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	45	45
Celriver and Galleria Station Feeder	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	30	30
Downtown Rock Hill Station Feeder along Saluda	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	45	45
Downtown Rock Hill Station Feeder along Black and Anderson	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	30	30
Anderson/Dave Lyle	Local	6:00am - 6:00pm	30	30
Rock Hill Express	Express	5:30am - 6:00pm	30	30
Celanese Express	Express	5:30am - 6:00pm	30	-
Lake Wylie Express	Express	5:30am - 6:00pm	30	-
Chester Express	Express	5:30am - 6:00pm	30	-
Lancaster Express	Express	5:30am - 6:00pm	30	-
Textile Corridor Trolley	Vintage Trolley	6:00am - 6:00pm	15	15
BRT along US-21 (including branch to Galleria)	BRT	5:30am - 2:00am	15	30

Source: Rock Hill-York County-Charlotte Rapid Transit Study Locally Preferred Alternative Refined Screening Analysis Report, April 2007. Unconstrained – for review purposes only.

Figure 8.3 - Transit Service Master Plan



Source: Rock Hill-York County-Charlotte Rapid Transit Study Locally Preferred Alternative Refined Screening Analysis Report, prepared April 2007

The following sections describe the individual services in the Master Plan:

Rock Hill-York County-Charlotte Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service

A key issue for public transportation in the RFATS Study Area is the connection to Charlotte. The RYC study concluded that the best option (the 'Locally Preferred Alternative' (LPA)) would be a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line running from downtown Rock Hill via US-21 to the I-485 light rail station. The BRT line would operate partly on a dedicated bus-way and partly in general traffic. The ultimate alignment is shown on **Figure 8.3**.

Starting in downtown Rock Hill, buses would operate in mixed traffic along White Street to Winthrop University. White Street would be extended to Cherry Road, with a station at the intersection of the two streets. From there, buses would operate in a dedicated guide-way along Cherry Road within the existing right-of-way. In some locations on Cherry Road, however, roadway expansion is constrained, and buses will operate in the general-purpose lanes, using queue-jump lanes and traffic signal pre-emption to increase bus travel speeds.

North of the Cherry Road / Anderson Road station, buses would operate in a dedicated guide-way along US-21 to SC-160 in Fort Mil. The service would then travel west a short distance on SC-160 to a new roadway, parallel to US-21 and I-77, extending from SC-160 to Gold Hill Road. This alignment improves transit access to the planned residential and commercial development in the area. Buses would operate in mixed traffic along this new road, Gold Hill Commons, and proposed new developments including the recently approved hospital to be located at the Sutton Road interchange of I-77.

The service would continue in mixed traffic along York Southern Road from Gold Hill Road toward the Norfolk Southern railroad corridor near Regent Parkway. Here, a dedicated two-lane guide-way would be built parallel to the railroad, extending north to Commerce Drive in Pineville. The service would then operate in mixed traffic along Commerce Drive and South Boulevard to the I-485 station on the CATS light rail line.

The BRT scheme also includes a four-mile spur from the Cherry/Anderson station, along Anderson Road and Dave Lyle Boulevard to the Galleria Mall just east of I-77. The spur would have a dedicated two-lane guide-way.

The line would have service every 15 minutes at peak times and every 30 minutes at off-peak times. The hours of operation would match those of the Lynx Blue Line light rail service. One role of the other transit services in the Master Plan is to act as feeder services, connecting residential neighborhoods to the BRT stations.

The study also recommended that emphasis be placed on encouraging appropriate transit supportive land use and development regulations, connecting major corridor destinations, and preserving rights-of-way for the transit alignment where appropriate through new development areas. The study's land use recommendations mirrored Charlotte's initiatives to make land use and zoning policy changes early in the transit development process in order to make transit projects more viable and competitive for federal funds.

The study estimated the capital cost of the project to be \$511-516 million in capital costs. It recommended four phases of implementation:

- Phase 1: start-up phase with all-day limited-stop service connecting the RFATS Study Area with the I-485 light rail station.
- Phase 2: Addition of local bus service to Tega Cay and Fort Mill and new connections to Gold Hill Commons.
- Phase 3: Implement first stage of exclusive BRT right-of-way segments.
- Phase 4: Implementation of the remaining exclusive BRT right-of-way segments.

RFATS communities are currently working together on a right-of-way preservation ordinance and transit-supportive zoning for the project. Next steps include a public awareness / marketing initiative to build local support for the project, and an overall funding and management strategy.

Other Express Services

82X Rock Hill Express: The existing Rock Hill express bus service has experienced increasing ridership since it was reinstated in October 2001 with CATS being responsible for route operations. The future route would be re-designed to complement operations along the US-21 BRT and/or CATS Lynx Blue LRT lines.

Celanese Road Addition: The *Rock Hill Urban Area Transit Implementation Plan* also proposed an additional route for the 82X to connect north Rock Hill with Charlotte. The new route would serve the Celanese Road/SC-161 corridor in Rock Hill.

Chester and Lancaster to Rock Hill and Charlotte: The *Needs and Potential for Coordination of Public Transit Services in the Catawba Region* study identified work trips from Chester and Lancaster to Rock Hill and Charlotte as a transit service need. The study recommended two express bus trips in the morning from both Chester and Lancaster to Center City Charlotte

with an intermediate stop at a proposed transit center near Dave Lyle Boulevard and I-77. There would be two return trips from Charlotte in the afternoon, again with an intermediate stop in Rock Hill.

Lake Wylie to Charlotte: York County Planning staff has discussed with CATS the operation of express bus service from Lake Wylie to Center City Charlotte along SC-49 and NC-49. The express route would begin near the intersection of SC-49 and SC-274 and operate during peak hours only. Implementation of the service depends on both parties agreeing to an equitable cost sharing arrangement.

Rock Hill Textile Corridor Vintage Streetcar

During preparation of the *Textile Corridor Master Plan*, the concept of a vintage trolley or streetcar service in Rock Hill was proposed. This service would be a rail operation, not a vintage-style bus.

The City of Rock Hill requested, and was granted, a federal earmark appropriation to conduct a feasibility study for a hard-rail streetcar line connecting the downtown with Winthrop University through the designated Textile Corridor. The study, initiated in Fall 2008, included a week-long planning charrette involving dozens of key stakeholders. From data collected during the charrette, a proposed route was developed circling the downtown, running under the Black Street/railroad grade separation, turning right mid-block paralleling the railroad, crossing Main Street and White Street, running behind the Cotton Factory then turning north to the Winthrop University campus. Other aspects of the study include assessing alternative streetcar vehicle designs and propulsion technologies, detailed route planning, and funding strategies for implementation.

Local Transit: Local Bus Routes

The final component of the Transit Service Master Plan is the local bus routes. These have two main functions: to provide for local trips, and to act as feeders to the US-21 BRT service.

The local routes originated in the 2005 Rock Hill Urban Area Transit Implementation Plan, which developed a preferred set of local transit services for the RFATS study area. They were subsequently refined and developed in the RYC study, resulting in the routes as now shown in the Transit Service Master Plan.

Rock Hill East: A route serving the Piedmont Medical Center, Winthrop University, downtown Rock Hill and the Dave Lyle Boulevard corridor to the Galleria Mall

Rock Hill West: A route connecting York County government offices, the SC-5 corridor and neighborhoods southwest of downtown Rock Hill

Feeder Service to Regent Park BRT Station: This would connect the Regent Park and Foxwood neighborhoods to the Regent Park Station. The western end of the route could connect Regent Park residents with the interim station located at US-21 and NC-51 until BRT service is relocated to the NS Railroad corridor. The eastern portion of the feeder route would use the proposed Springfield Parkway-Regent Parkway Connector once it is constructed. Service along this end of the route would not begin until the Regent Park BRT station is operational.

Gold Hill Road-Tega Cay-Baxter-Fort Mill Bus Service: This proposed bus route would connect areas along Gold Hill Road, the City of Tega Cay, Baxter Village and the Town of Fort Mill with proposed BRT stations at Gold Hill Commons and on SC-160 at the proposed hospital. The route extends east of Fort Mill along Doby's Bridge Road to serve rapidly developing residential and commercial areas. In addition to serving the two BRT stations, the proposed route would link Tega Cay, Baxter and Fort Mill with all-day bus service.

Rock Hill-Fort Mill Bus Service: Fixed-route bus service between Fort Mill and Rock Hill could connect residents of these two communities to the proposed BRT stations along US-21, Cherry Road, and downtown Rock Hill. Because bus stops along this route would be more frequently spaced, residents could use the service to access the BRT line with its limited number of stations.

Anderson Road/Dave Lyle Boulevard Bus Service: Fixed-route bus service along Anderson Road and Dave Lyle Boulevard would be a precursor to ultimate BRT service along these two thoroughfares between the Anderson/Cherry BRT station and the Galleria Mall. Because bus stops along this route would be more frequently spaced, residents could use the service to access the BRT spur with its limited number of stations.

Feeder Service to Celriver and Galleria BRT Stations: Feeder bus service could be implemented to connect areas along Celriver and Red River Roads to the proposed Celriver BRT Station.

Feeder Service to Downtown Rock Hill BRT Station: Two feeder routes to the downtown Rock Hill station are proposed. One would serve the southern portion of Rock Hill. The proposed route would operate along Saluda Street (SC-72) to Oakdale Road. Feeder service would continue along Oakdale to its intersection with Mount Holly Road (SC-901). The other route connects a possible park and ride lot located at the I-77/Anderson

interchange to the downtown Rock Hill station. The bus service would also connect residential areas along Anderson Road and Black Street in southeast Rock Hill to the proposed BRT facility.

Rock Hill Special Events Trolley

In addition to the projects listed in the Transit Service Master Plan, the City of Rock Hill is developing proposals for a special events ‘trolley’. This historic-style bus would operate during festivals, sports events and possibly weekends.

Stakeholder Input

As described in the Public Involvement Element, public transportation was a common theme for stakeholders. There were requests for additional options, including employment-related transportation options, offering existing services outside of traditional business hours, and transportation for seniors and special needs/underprivileged individuals on an as needed basis. Also mentioned as a suggestion at public outreach meetings was the desire for more outreach activities as well as making the planning process more transparent and conducting a holistic view of intermodal connectivity.

Recommendations

- RFATS communities should continue their current activities aimed at laying the groundwork for the BRT project.
- In accordance with MAP 21 include representation by public transportation providers on the MPO board.
- RFATS should continue to monitor opportunities for funding elements of the Transit Service Master Plan, including non-traditional sources such as urban program funding and/or economic stimulus funding.
- RFATS should ensure that it has at least one small, low-cost scheme that is ‘ready to go’, in order to be able to use funding opportunities as they arise.
- RFATS should consider raising awareness among local stakeholders of the role of public transportation within the available funding sources. This should include considering whether, and to what extent, the flexible surface transportation funds, which have traditionally been seen as highway funds, could increasingly also be used for public transportation projects.

- RFATS should explore options, such as ridesharing programs, for providing transportation alternatives aimed at trips for transit service is not available. This should include ridesharing programs.

Conclusion

- Public transportation is currently a small element of overall transportation demand. However, it is particularly important to some sections of the community.
- The demand for public transportation is likely to increase in the future, for demographic and economic reasons as well due to congestion on highway networks.
- There is currently a basic level of local transit available within the RFATS Study Area, including links to Charlotte.
- A step-change in the level and quality of local transit service will be needed if transit is to become a realistic alternative to driving for many people, as well as to make a significant contribution to wider economic and sustainability goals.
- Fulfillment of the Transit Service Master Plan would represent a major step toward providing that step-change. The Master Plan envisions a set of complementary services that provide not only for commuting options between many neighborhoods and Charlotte, but also for a wide range of local transit trips within the RFATS Study Area.
- It is not yet clear whether political priorities at the local, state and national level will provide the kind of attention and funding that is needed to produce this step-change.
- Inter-city connections to/from the RFATS Study Area will depend on a range of external factors including inter-city bus policy and the extent to which the South-East High Speed Rail corridor develops. As with local transit, political priorities at the state and national levels will be the determining factor. Within the RFATS Study Area, planners will need to consider the need for links to these services as part of the local transit planning process.

The recommendations of Public Transportation Element balance the need for improved facilities with programs designed to educate the public in the safe use of these facilities, encourage the active use of facilities, and evaluate the effectiveness of these facilities and programs. They are grounded in a planning process that included analysis, public outreach, and a review of previous and

on-going planning efforts. The recommendations consider public transportation users throughout the entire MPO area and have also been weighed against the needs identified in the other elements of the *RFATS 2035 LRTP*. Utilizing federal, state, and local funding programs will allow the implementation of a variety of public transportation improvements over the coming years.