



# CONNECT Beyond

A Regional Mobility Initiative



Over the last year, we have highlighted each of CONNECT Beyond's **Mobility Moves** in our newsletter. These moves are the categories of recommendations in the plan that will transform the way people travel around our region. This was a good way to share an overview of the **plan** and to help educate stakeholders on the CONNECT Beyond project.

As we move further into implementation, we are switching to highlighting specific **plan recommendations** in this and future newsletters - getting into more detail and showing the plan in action in our region. Today's newsletter focuses on recommendations related to **transit coordination**, a key suite of recommendations that will help to create seamless travel across our region.

We are just at the beginning of implementing the plan's transit coordination recommendations, but it is important to recognize the work stakeholders are doing today. With **early successes** (and lessons learned), our region can build momentum and implement more complex recommendations and improve transit coordination.

CONNECT Beyond implementation activities, including for transit coordination, are now highlighted on our **website**. This is a resource to keep stakeholders educated and engaged on the latest project activities. Please check it out!

# Plan Recommendation Spotlight: Transit Coordination

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*Photo courtesy of Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS)*

A key component to building a **Better Bus Network** and **Expanding Mobility Choices** for travelers in our region is improving transit coordination. With 17 transit providers in our region, **coordination will be critical to creating seamless connections** and improving travel across jurisdictional boundaries. **CONNECT Beyond's plan** contains a number of recommendations to increase transit coordination, including unified and coordinated technology platforms to better facilitate fare collection, transfers and service planning for transit agencies, alignment of eligibility and policies for paratransit services and standards for transit amenities amongst agencies.

CONNECT Beyond's **Seamless CONNECTIONs** effort is creating a more robust discussion in the region on how to **improve customer experiences** while traveling between counties, communities and even states in the region.

Some of the efforts taking place today include:

- Formalizing the **transfer agreements** between CATS and Rider at the JW Clay Blue Line Station.
- Evaluating **transit planning software platforms**, such as **Remix**, for all the transit systems to use and enable more dynamic service coordination between transit providers.
- Quarterly meetings of **Mobility Managers Group** to discuss transit service-related issues in the region.

In the coming year we look forward to expanding on these activities, as well as identifying opportunities to improve transit fare coordination and increase efficiencies from the user perspective, evaluating funding opportunities for transit coordination and exploring mobility hub locations. [MNI](#)

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## Learn More: What Does Transit Look Like in Other Communities?

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Our region is not alone in wanting to

create a more seamless system for customers throughout the region. These efforts are taking place in regions across the country such as **San Francisco Bay Area, Atlanta, Seattle, Minneapolis, Chicago** and **Tampa Bay**. As CONNECT Beyond continues to advance in these efforts, we look to learn best practices from these regions and apply them to our region.



### **Upcoming Events:**

**Centralina Regional Mobility Managers Group Meeting**, September 12th, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. – *If you are interested in attending this meeting, please reach out to Katie Kutcher at [kkutcher@centralina.org](mailto:kkutcher@centralina.org).*

**NC BikeWalk Summit**, September 14-15th, Catawba College, Salisbury. The Summit is a multi-day conference that focuses exclusively on the safety, health, community design, and equity dimensions of active mobility. [More information here.](#)

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## **Project Updates**

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### **Advancing the Plan Committee Continues to Work on Regional Collaboration**



CONNECT Beyond's **Advancing the Plan Committee**, an official ad-hoc advisory committee of Centralina's Executive Board, was established to **steward regional conversation and action that advances implementation** of the CONNECT Beyond Regional Mobility Plan. The Committee convenes elected officials, city and county managers and members of the business community who are meeting on a bi-monthly basis throughout the year. The Committee most recently met in July to discuss insights and lessons learned from peer regions on regional governance approaches.

*For more information:* <https://centralina.org/advancing-the-plan/>

## Annual Report

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It is hard to believe that we are nearing the second anniversary of the completion of CONNECT Beyond's plan. The project team is planning to **recognize the milestone with an annual report** highlighting plan implementation efforts across the region. We would like to hear from our stakeholders and what they have been working on to advance mobility in their community. If you have a mobility success story to share, please send it to Sarah Niess at [sniess@centralina.org](mailto:sniess@centralina.org). We will be recognizing success stories in the annual report and upcoming newsletters. Thank you!

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## Resources

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**Funding Opportunity:** The [Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program](#) is now open. The [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) combines two years of funding (fiscal years 2022 & 2023), \$3.4 million in total, to provide grants to eligible applicants on a first-come, first-served basis. Individual awards will range in value up to the statutory limit of \$360,000. The **Build America Bureau** has created a simple, four-page funding application, available [here](#). Find the slides and recordings from previous webinars [here](#).

**Electric Vehicle (EV) Toolkits:** USDOT released a [Rural Electric Vehicle \(EV\) Toolkit](#) as a resource to help a variety of rural community stakeholders scope, plan and identify ways to fund electric mobility charging infrastructure for broader public or private use. The toolkit not only focuses on infrastructure for light-duty electric passenger vehicles, but also addresses funding opportunities and planning considerations for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles and agricultural equipment. USDOT also has an [Urban EV Toolkit](#) intended for a variety of urban stakeholders, including states, local communities, transportation providers, nonprofits and businesses.

**NCDOT's Residents Guide to Transportation – Empowering Community Decision Making:** This guide is a dynamic, interactive set of documents complemented by an online simulation. It spells out how a transportation infrastructure idea transforms into a project and provides a high-level approach to understanding the **State Transportation Improvement Program** process. This guide is available for print, online and multimedia use, making it accessible to a wide range of stakeholders. Check it out [here](#).

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## Plan in Action: Local Successes

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### Centralina Receives Climate Pollution Reduction Grant

Centralina Regional Council received a \$1 million planning grant through the U.S EPA's [Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program](#), a two-stage grant program that includes funding for noncompetitive planning grants and competitive implementation grants. Our staff will serve as the lead entity for the 13-county, bi-state area and will prepare a series of plans designed to support local needs and

priorities toward improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. **Many of the CONNECT Beyond recommendations could be supported through this program.** We encourage all of our communities and transportation planning organizations to stay tuned for implementation funding opportunities in September 2023.

For more information: <https://centralina.org/blog/centralina-receives-climate-pollution-reduction-grant/>

## **Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization's Transit Providers Work Group**

The [Transit Education Initiative Task Force](#) was formed in June 2020 by the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) to lay the foundation for a shared understanding of federal funding for public transit in its planning area (Iredell, Mecklenburg and Union counties). This task force identified next steps to better understand the needs and goals of the transit providers that operate within the CRTPO planning area, as well as to grow knowledge around federal and state transit funding and regulations. In furtherance of these goals, CRTPO is forming a **Transit Providers Work Group** and plans to hold a kick-off meeting in September.

## **CATS Receives FTA Low- and No-Emission Bus Grant Award**

The City of Charlotte will receive funding to buy battery-electric and hybrid-electric diesel buses, charging equipment and a natural gas generator and to develop a workforce training program to train technicians and operators on the new technology. The project will improve service, reliability and air quality for residents in Charlotte and surrounding areas.

For more information: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/bus-program>

## **Statewide Locally Coordinated Plan Workshops and Survey**

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is starting the public outreach phase of the Statewide Locally Coordinated Plan. The Plan will identify gaps and needs throughout the state to plan for projects and services that will improve and expand mobility options for older adults and people with disabilities. To participate in a workshop or take the public survey, please visit the [NCDOT website](#).

## **In Closing: Sharing CONNECT Beyond**

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It is exciting to see all that is happening around the region to support increased mobility and connectivity. Let us know if you have transit-related news to share by emailing us at [connect-beyond@centralina.org](mailto:connect-beyond@centralina.org).

Thank you,

Jason Wager, AICP CEP  
CONNECT Beyond Project Manager



**CENTRALINA**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

