

Regional Transportation Alliance
Statement on final Special Transit Advisory Commission (STAC) regional transit vision
Friday, April 25, 2008

The Regional Transportation Alliance supports the overall three-pronged STAC regional transit vision consisting of the following prioritized sequence of investments:

1. **Enhanced regional and local bus service**, including express bus corridors – must precede other, more capital-intensive investments to provide visible improvements in our regional transit system, build transit ridership, and grow public support for transit across the region;
2. **Several subregional transit circulators**, serving Chapel Hill, Cary, Durham, Raleigh, and the RTP-RDU area – all initially bus, with some becoming light rail/trolley – must be next in sequence to create focused segments where enhanced land use and mobility options are possible; and
3. **A 56-mile regional rail system** touching Chapel Hill, Downtown Durham, RTP, Downtown Cary, Downtown Raleigh, and North Raleigh – perhaps preceded by commuter rail, with potential commuter rail extensions to outlying areas – will complete the future regional transit vision.

The Alliance recognizes that a robust local funding source is essential for realizing our region's transit vision, and the Alliance supports the STAC's recommendations of a substantial local option funding source (½-cent sales tax or equivalent) as a primary funding mechanism, with State funding complementing the local share.

The Alliance believes the following two principles are critical for establishing and consolidating support for the prioritized sequence of regional transit investments described above:

- **New governance model and public accountability required for support and success.**
 - Governance remains our biggest concern because the specifics of how the program will be managed are essential to gaining voter approval for the vision throughout the region
 - The overall package of projects – including the proposed local funding source(s), the associated financial plan, the breakdowns by transit mode, and local vs. regional splits – must be authorized by individual boards of county commissioners and approved by a vote of the people in participating counties
 - Implementation of the regional transit vision, including spending and prioritization decisions within an overall framework outlined by the authorizing counties, should be overseen by a regional board of trustees comprised entirely of local elected officials that represent the various taxpayer bases across the region
- **Detailed study of technology, project sequencing, land use integration and pedestrian-bicycle connectivity options to maximize the quality of life return on our investments.**
 - A variety of bus technology options should be considered to minimize energy consumption and environmental impacts while providing an attractive, state-of-the-art flexible route transit experience befitting our high tech region
 - While the circulators can begin using bus technology, the region should examine light rail/trolley options for each corridor, given the potential land use and ridership benefits
 - The region should evaluate potential short-term commuter rail options to and through the Triangle that may emerge from the ongoing NC Railroad study
 - The region should initiate a more detailed study of regional rail propulsion options for the regional rail corridor, given the inherent tradeoffs among costs, safety, flexibility, grade separation viability and environmental impact
 - All major capital investment studies must include up-to-date ridership and cost-effectiveness data that inform the selection of investment priorities
 - The region should examine and pursue opportunities to improve pedestrian-bicycle connectivity to the various elements of the regional transit vision
 - Local governments should seek opportunities to encourage and harmonize transit-supportive land use policies for property adjacent to future rail and trolley stations

The Alliance urges that the necessary governance changes and detailed studies be initiated as soon as possible in order to speed the realization of the region's transit future.