

# GO FORWARD

A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN TRANSIT

## Wake Transit Community Engagement Strategy

**Project Name:** *Recommended FY 2024 Wake Transit Work Plan Community Engagement*

**Project ID:** *T0002-D*

**Project Sponsor:** *GoTriangle*

**Project Start Date:** *5/1/2023*

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## Adoption Schedule

April 19 @ 9:30am	TPAC	Present proposed Community Engagement strategy and draft communications materials
April 27 @ 1:30pm	CE Subcommittee	Present proposed Community Engagement strategy and draft communications materials
May 1-14	Community Review & Public Comment Period	Present Recommended Work Plan to the public for their input
May 17 @ 4pm	CAMPO Executive Board	Public Hearing
June 1 @ 10am	CAMPO TCC	Considers Work Plan Adoption
June 21 @ 4pm	CAMPO Executive Board	Considers Work Plan Adoption
June 28 @ Noon	GoTriangle Board of Trustees	Considers Work Plan Adoption

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## Opportunity & Purpose

Wake Transit is a taxpayer-supported program that defines the logistical and financial goals of bus services and capital investments in Wake County. The Wake Transit Work Plan serves as the tax district's fiscal budget apparatus for the public transportation needs of all partner communities and their residents, both locally and regionally.

While serving current needs, Wake Transit is also helping prepare community members and stakeholders for the future of commuting in Wake County and the Greater Triangle Region. Continually connecting communities and working to offer the best public transit options possible, the program works toward transit services that are efficient, accessible, safe, and friendly. The program continually seeks public input to improve the transit network for all.

The Recommended Work Plan allocates projected revenues to fund service investments and capital projects that will improve Wake County's transit network and bus services in the upcoming fiscal year (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024). The Wake Transit Work Plan is the listing of projects that will receive Wake Transit funding in the coming fiscal year. The Recommended Work Plan also contains estimates for future year operating and capital programs of projects covering a seven-year timeframe.

*Which needs does the Recommended Work Plan help meet?* The 2020 Census revealed that Wake County officially became the largest county in North Carolina, overtaking Mecklenburg County. Wake County's population grew to 1,129,410. It is estimated that Wake County adds about 62 new residents per day. While a cause for celebration, Wake County's numbers highlight the importance of strategic planning when it comes to operating public transportation services and budgeting the necessary capital investments to serve the needs of the entire community.

With North Carolina's population above 10.4 million residents, Wake County is currently home to more than 10 percent of the state's total. The Greater Triangle Region's populace is projected to grow by more than a million people by 2050, resulting in an estimated one million additional vehicles on the roads. More than 800,000 new jobs are also coming to the Greater Triangle Region by 2050. Wake County has been reported as the third fastest-growing county in the United States. With Wake County's positive growth arrives new residents, increased traffic congestion, and a heightened need for innovative and transformational transit solutions that serve all communities. The Wake Transit process is a collaborative and inclusive progression that governs the development of services and capital investments that optimize the transit network.

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## Community Review & Public Comment

The Recommended FY 2024 Wake Transit Work Plan is open for review and comment from May 1 to May 14, 2023. This follows the 30-day community review and public comment period for the Draft version of the plan, which took place February 20 to March 22, 2023. It resulted in 1,669 views and 839 public comments on the Draft FY2024 Wake Transit Work Plan.

Current and potential riders have the opportunity to review plans and provide input on what meets or does not serve their needs and expectations for transit in Wake County and its municipalities. The principles of the Wake Transit Program are dependent upon public input as part of the decision-making process. An inclusive and diverse level of public opinion helps ensure the investments developed and supported with budgets and personnel through the Wake Transit Work Plan are in line with the needs of the populations most in need. In addition, all members of the Wake Transit community are afforded an equal opportunity to access, review, and provide comments on the strategy, goals, and details of the plans and their possible touchpoints on communities of concern.



## The Four Big Moves

The Wake Transit Program is guided by the Four Big Moves: 1) Connect the Region; 2) Connect All Wake County Communities; 3) Create Frequent and Reliable Urban Mobility; and, 4) Enhance Access to Transit.

 <p><b>CONNECT THE REGION</b></p>	 <p><b>CONNECT ALL WAKE COUNTY COMMUNITIES</b></p>	 <p><b>CREATE FREQUENT, RELIABLE URBAN MOBILITY</b></p>	 <p><b>ENHANCE ACCESS TO TRANSIT</b></p>
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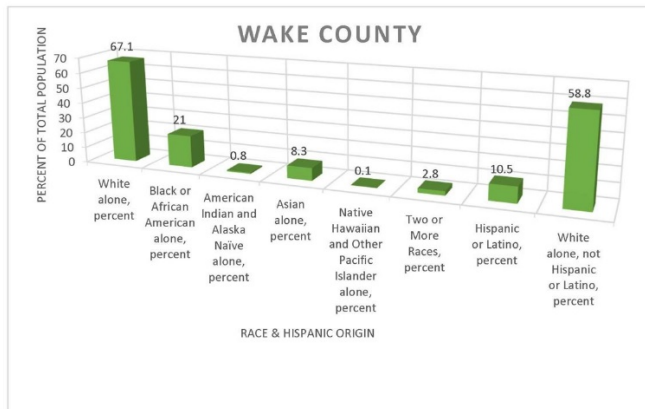
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## Key Population Samples

Voters approved the Wake County Transit Program in 2016 to serve the transportation needs of the entirety of Wake County and its communities. There are many factors that impact the 1.13 million residents who live in Wake County, such as income levels, distance to employment, medical concerns, educational opportunities, and others. Figure 1 shows the race and Hispanic origin of Wake County’s population as of the last U.S. Census update in July 2021. This strategic communication and community engagement campaign is designed to engage a representative sample of the total population through a survey that captures their attitudes and opinions about the Recommended FY2024 Wake Transit Work Plan. An objective of the effort is to mirror Wake County’s demographics with results that match or exceed the data in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Wake County Race, Hispanic Origin, Data



FACTORS	DATA
Households, 2017-2021	422,144
Persons per household	2.59
Language other than English spoken at home	17.50%
Households with a computer, percent, 2017-2021	97.20%
Households with a broadband internet subscription, percent, 2017-2021	93.70%
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2017-2021	5.90%
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years +, 2017-2021	25.6 min
Median household income (2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$88,471
Per capita income in past 12 months (2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$45,425
Persons in poverty, percent	9.40%
Persons under 5 years, percent	5.70%
Persons under 18 years, percent	23.20%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	12.60%
Female persons, percent	51.10%
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2017-2021	93.70%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 +, 2017-2021	54.70%

Wake County, NC  
 US Census Bureau, July 2, 2021  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/wakecountynorthcarolina/LFE041221#LFE041221>

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Raleigh, Cary, Apex, Wake Forest, Holly Springs, Fuquay-Varina, Garner, Knightdale, Morrisville, Rolesville, Wendell, Zebulon, the Research Triangle Park, and North Carolina State University are all vibrant Wake Transit partners. Each community has transit needs and their residents have a voice and opportunity to be involved through community engagement. This engagement strategy is designed to provide equal access for the entire Wake Transit community by combining digital resources and channels with printed, translated, and educational materials that best serve the county's digital and traditional audiences.

During 2017-2021, households in Wake County with a computer exceeded 97.2%, while those with broadband internet subscriptions reached 93.7%. When smartphones and other mobile devices are factored into the digital saturation equation, the results indicate the vast majority of Wake County residents are digitally connected. They are also consumers of Internet-based information. These are high percentages, but it is important to emphasize that the small proportion of the population without computer and broadband access is the most likely to be public transit-dependent. Overall, Wake County residents are educated, with 93.7% identified as high school graduates and 54.7% completing a bachelor's degree or higher. Yet, 5.9% of residents reported a disability under the age of 65. In addition, 9.4% of persons were considered to be in poverty. Finally, 17.5% reported a language other than English being spoken at home.

A "low-income individual" is defined as a person whose family income is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line, as stated in section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902 (2)). Family size is a factor used in determining whether residents may fall below the poverty line. Policies concerning the poverty line are developed by the Office of Management and Budget based on the most recent data available from the Bureau of the Census. The following audiences are key segments that help ensure thorough and inclusive outreach for the Recommended Work Plan. Riders and non-riders from historically underserved communities protected by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and additional laws and regulations, represent the Wake Transit Program's key population samples, which include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following ones:

- Low-income populations
- Minority populations
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations
- Individuals with disabilities
- Seniors above 65
- Youth
- College students

Strategic communications will be conducted through digital channels and materials, as well as through a public hearing and transit partner assistance that will help disseminate the information through the ripple effect. Translated materials and language interpretation services are available.



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## **Messaging**

Messaging seeks to educate residents about the Wake Transit Program and ask for their input.

- The Recommended FY2024 Wake Transit Work Plan is focused on improving facilities and equipment through key investments.
- The Wake Transit Program is guided by the Four Big Moves.

## **Digital & Non-Digital Communications**

- Email Campaign
- News Release
- Online survey, with options for email, mail, text, and voice messages
- Partner Action
- Printed Materials (Spanish, English)
- Public Hearing
- Social Media Campaign
- Transit Rider Alert
- Website content and updates

## **Media Kit**

A media kit will be developed and made available to Wake Transit partners, the media, and other stakeholders and interested parties. The media kit is designed to help promote the community review and public comment period with specific information and materials. The media kit will include digital and print materials, covering the range of available options that are proven to be effective. Materials will be available in English and Spanish.

## **Advertising**

To provide equal access for the Spanish-speaking population, social media ads will be developed in Spanish and targeted to Wake County communities with Hispanic and Latino communities above the 10% threshold. Transit ads will be provided in English and Spanish and be used to direct people to the GoForward website where the online survey and in-person events are advertised. To provide equal access for the Spanish-speaking population, social media ads will be developed in Spanish and targeted to Wake County communities with Hispanic and Latino communities above the 10% threshold.

## **GoForward Webpage**

Wake Transit partners and stakeholders can expect content developed for the GoForward webpage. The website will include the survey link, as well as digital and print communications materials available to download.

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## Outreach Planning & Recruitment

The Community & Public Engagement Team and Strategic Communications Coordinator will collaborate with Wake Transit partners to inform the public of the opportunity to review the Recommended Work Plan. This includes outreach to more than 150 community organizations to inform leaders of the upcoming opportunity to participate and determine the most appropriate approach to meet their constituents' needs when it comes to providing input.

## Survey

A survey, including key demographic questions, is being developed to collect feedback from public transit riders and potential riders. The survey will be available in print and online. It will be available in English and Spanish with a variety of options, such as calling (919) 485-RIDE (7433), texting, email, mail, and online. To increase public participation and receive more relevant comments, the survey includes specific questions based on criteria developed by transit planners and project sponsors. It also includes space for open-ended comments related to the Wake Bus Plan and the Annual Work Plan. The survey should include access and assistance language, such as, "If you need assistance to take this survey or to otherwise participate in these activities, please contact (919) 485-RIDE (7433) at least 3 business days in advance of a scheduled event or the end of the comment period."

