MICROTRANSIT GUIDELINES

The Wake Transit Plan facilitates the funding of a variety of transit services and mode types to achieve the established "Four Big Moves":

Connect the Region

Connect All Wake County Communities

Create Frequent, Reliable, Urban Mobility

Enhance Access to Transit

Microtransit is a flexible, shared-ride transportation service that uses specific technology applications to allow passengers to request on-demand trips in multi-passenger vehicles.

HOW MICROTRANSIT WORKS

- Passengers contact the transit agency through an app, phone call, etc., to book shared transit services.
- Trips are scheduled based on a passenger's starting location, final requested destination, and other passenger trip requests within the same time frame and general area, with a goal of grouping as many trips as possible.
- Typically utilizing smaller vehicles, the agency picks up the passenger(s) at their location and drops them off at their requested destination.

Potential Benefits of Microtransit

Flexibility:
- For Passengers –
  - Trips can be requested on-demand and are not limited to a fixed-route bus schedule.
  - Based on the service model type, there is more flexibility in trip starting and ending points.

- For Transit Agencies –
  - Service may be provided with smaller vehicles, removing limitations for drivers who do not have a commercial driver license.
  - Microtransit can be customized to each transit provider's needs. No two microtransit systems are exactly alike in terms of vehicle type, service model, technology platform, etc.

Efficiency:

- Transit providers can respond to changes in demand in real-time, allowing operators to scale service to demand.
- Service can be more cost-effective and productive than traditional fixed-route in low density areas—where there may be demand/need, but not the density to support fixed-route bus service.
- In some cases, on-demand services can be combined with ADA paratransit services trips to provide service efficiencies.

Role of Microtransit within Wake Transit

Microtransit services are an emerging mobility tool for transit operators and communities in Wake County. Transit operators, municipalities, and private entities have been developing and testing different ways to provide flexible, shared-ride transportation services. Communities piloting microtransit services have been utilizing varied technologies and service models to best fit the unique needs of participating communities.

Microtransit services in Wake County have been providing:

- First mile/last mile connections to/from regional transit services.
- Local trips within and between communities.
- Integrated services for seniors and people with disabilities.

The early success of microtransit systems in Wake County is encouraging other transit operators and communities to develop new or expand existing programs. The guidelines identified in this document recognize the importance and continued expansion of microtransit services and provide the base to support that expansion with the delivery of a consistent service structure.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Wake Transit Plan utilizes transit service design guidelines and performance measures to match the appropriate type and level of transit service with the corresponding need. These guidelines and policies frame decisions related to funding and implementation and ensure similar services are implemented consistently across the entire service area. Service guidelines also set standards and expectations for each service type, including span (hours/days of operation), vehicle accessibility, passenger wait time, etc.

The Wake Transit Microtransit Guidelines build upon two other Wake Transit Plan documents: the Wake Transit Bus Plan Service Standards and the Wake and Durham Bus Plans Microtransit Toolkit. The guidelines include findings and recommendations identified in these documents and describe how Wake Transit funds will be used to support Transit Plan priorities and increase consistency in the way microtransit is implemented and funded. The guidelines set policy for how Wake Transit Plan funding will be used to support microtransit services in the following ways:

- Define Wake Transit's microtransit funding priorities
- Provide flexibility for communities to meet their local transportation needs and goals
- Ensure Wake Transit's investments are cost-effective, sustainable, and equitable.

The guidelines are focused on two aspects of service:

1) Design, operations, and passenger systems
2) Evaluation and measurement

These guidelines will help determine which funding bucket microtransit services will be funded from: the general Wake Transit Plan budget or through the Community Funding Area (CFA) Program – a fund set-aside within the larger Wake Transit Plan budget.

Wake County Transit Funding

Wake Transit Plan funds can be used to conduct service/planning studies, operate services, or implement capital projects associated with a microtransit program. Local (Wake County) funding for transit service and capital investments administered through the Wake Transit Plan is largely distributed through one of two programs:

1) **Wake Transit Plan Funds** are available to transit providers in Wake County for projects that are identified and funded through the Wake Transit Annual Work Plan development process. Historically, these funds have been allocated to the Town of Cary (GoCary), City of Raleigh (GoRaleigh), GoTriangle and Wake County (GoWakeAccess).

   - There is no local funding match associated with Wake Transit Plan funds, but local municipalities are required to maintain transit service levels that were in place before Wake Transit Plan funds were available. In addition, Wake Transit general funding typically has a higher level of operational consistency required (agency sponsor,

minimum service spans, frequencies, fares, etc.) and service performance standards as compared with CFA program funded service projects.

2) **Community Funding Area (CFA) Program** is a competitive grant program offering matching funds to smaller Wake County communities enabling them to create new travel options or expand current transit services to meet their local travel demands. As of January 2025, the following 10 municipalities, as well as Research Triangle Park (RTP), are eligible for funding by the Community Funding Area Program:

1. Morrisville
2. Apex
3. Holly Springs
4. Fuquay-Varina
5. Garner
6. Wendell
7. Knightdale
8. Zebulon
9. Rolesville
10. Wake Forest

Note: Wake County is expected to be eligible for CFA Program funds in FY27.

Local communities must fund at least 35% of the cost of service, with the CFA Program providing the matching 65%. There is more flexibility given to services funded through the CFA Program in terms of service characteristics because service model, operator, branding, fare pricing, technology platform, etc. are not strictly prescribed. However, through policy decisions, Wake Transit can guide communities towards service standards and characteristics that create a more consistent rider experience across all services.

Although, there are two potential funding paths for microtransit services, in most cases, eligible communities will fund a microtransit service through the CFA Program. An exception to this rule occurs when a Wake Transit Plan-funded fixed-route service consistently does not meet Wake Transit performance standards. In these cases, communities may work with Wake Transit partners and the service operator (i.e., GoRaleigh) to shift Wake Transit dollars from the operation of a fixed-route service to funding microtransit. No local match would be required in this scenario, but as market conditions and demand levels change, the microtransit service could potentially be reverted to fixed-route service again.

MICROTRANSIT SERVICE GUIDELINES

Design, Operations and Passenger Systems

Both the Wake Transit Plan and the CFA Program provide the project sponsor flexibility in how services are implemented. The Microtransit Guidelines seek to balance the need for local preference and control of services with the overarching goal of developing a regional transit network that is consistent across Wake County.

Wake Transit Microtransit Guidelines	
Encouraged	Encouraged program component but not required for funding.
Required	Program component must be included to receive funding.

With these overarching goals in mind, the Wake Transit Plan has established guidelines for each aspect of microtransit service, noting which are required and which are encouraged. The guidelines aim to encourage consistency in service delivery with minimum standards, while also providing flexibility for agencies to administer service that meets their unique needs. The following characteristics will be discussed and service level requirements for each funding path identified:

- Service Goals
- Operating Characteristics
- Service Model (Pick-Up/Drop-Off Standards)
- ADA Accessibility
- Fare Policy
- Technology System/Platform
- Branding
- Contract Model

Microtransit Service Guidelines

The guidelines detailed below provide guidance to those planning, implementing, and operating microtransit programs through the Wake Transit Plan. Minimum standards are associated with the eligible funding source, with microtransit services funded with Wake Transit Funds generally having more prescriptive program characteristics.

Service Model Standards

Service model characteristics address the policies for trip pick-up and drop-off locations within a defined geographic zone. There are different models for how microtransit service operates, primarily if the service picks up and drops off at the passenger's doorstep (known as door-to-door or curb-to-curb) or if the service requires travelers to walk to a specific location (node-based or corner-to-corner).

Service Type	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Curb-to-Curb or Door-to-Door	Customers are picked up and dropped off as close as possible to the requested destination.	Encouraged	Encouraged
Node-Based	Provides passenger trips to and from designated points. Points are typically high demand destinations—major employers, healthcare facilities, shopping centers, and social service providers. The designated drop-off "nodes", or "stations" may have some level of passenger amenities.	Encouraged	Encouraged
Corner-to-Corner	Customers are picked up and dropped off at designated corners or intersections, rather than directly at their doorsteps. This approach increases efficiency by utilizing pre-determined stops but requires customers to walk a short distance to a nearby intersection. Ideally, the corners or intersections chosen are signalized with safe crossings and sidewalk connections.	Encouraged	Encouraged

Operating Characteristics

Operating characteristics refer to the way the service works, including span (the days and hours of service), customer wait times[1], late trips[2], and missed trips[3]. The Wake Transit Plan is working towards consistent operating characteristics so riders can expect a similar level of service no matter which transit operator or town is providing the service.

Technology Solution	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Span	Service provided at least 12 hours per weekday.	Required	Required
	Service span matches or exceeds the span of the connecting transit service.	Encouraged	Required
Customer Wait Times	Passenger wait times should not exceed 30 minutes.	Encouraged	Required
Late Trips	Late trips should be <10% of total trips fulfilled.	Required	Required
Missed Trips	Missed trips should be <10% of total trips fulfilled.	Required	Required
Service Availability	Weekdays	Required	Required
	Saturdays	Encouraged	Encouraged
	Sundays	Encouraged	Encouraged

[1] For microtransit services, a rider's wait is measured in the time between a trip booking and the arrival of a microtransit vehicle. Whereas for fixed route transit services, a rider's wait is measured in service frequency.
[2] A late trip is measured as any passenger not picked up within an additional 10 minutes beyond the desired pickup window, but the trip was completed.
[3] A missed trip is measured by the inability of a service provider to pick up a passenger within the desired customer wait time plus an additional 10 minutes and the trip was not completed.

ADA Accessibility

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transit systems to provide equal access and opportunity to people with disabilities. As a result, microtransit services must be accessible to people with disabilities. Although not every vehicle must be accessible, the same quality of service must be provided to people with and without disabilities.

Accessibility Type	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Vehicle Accessibility	A portion of vehicles have lifts or ramps to facilitate boardings for passengers with mobility impairments and an interior securement area for passengers using wheelchairs.	Required	Required
Trip Booking Systems	Provide systems to book trips that are available to people with different abilities, such as apps with screen- readers, and a number to local call centers with staff to assist with trip booking.	Required	Required
Facility Accessibility	If node-based, all permanent nodes* should be ADA accessible with a paved concrete boarding area. All nodes built using Wake Transit funds are required to be ADA accessible. If a microtransit system is curb-to-curb or door-to-door, operators should identify the nearest safe, ADA accessible location for passengers in need of such assistance to exit and board the vehicle.	Encouraged	Required

All temporary nodes must be either converted to a permanent node or removed at the end of a 2-year pilot phase.

Fare Policy

The Wake Transit Plan allows individual transit operators to set their own fares. However, the largest regional transit operators participate in a shared fare system allowing riders to access most transit systems in the region and support free transfers between services.[4] A clear fare policy and process that is consistent across operators helps riders by making services easier to understand and access.

Fare Policy	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Fare Free	Service operates with no fare and with no plans to introduce a fare.	Encouraged	Encouraged
Fare Free Pilot	Implemented with initial fare-free phase, but with planned implementation of fare structure. End date of fare free period must be established in initial planning phase and be clearly documented in public engagement and marketing materials for the service.	Encouraged	Encouraged
Unique Fare	Service operated with a fare based on opinion of decision-makers within the community and not tied to any operator fare or connecting transit service fare.	Encouraged	N/A
Base Fare	Microtransit base fare must be equivalent to the Wake Transit Plan regional fare structure.	Encouraged	Required

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[4] In January 2025, GoRaleigh and GoTriangle both charge fares and participate in UMO, a shared fare system. GoCary is planning to remain fare free at least through June 2025.

Technology Platform/System

Microtransit technology platforms, or scheduling systems, use software to connect transit riders with vehicles in real-time. The technology platform includes software used by the transit agency to schedule and assign trips as well as the system (or app) used by the passenger to schedule a ride. Best practices show that consistent trip booking systems, where a rider can book and pay for multiple services using the same app, makes the service easier to use, understand, and will attract more riders.

At a minimum, microtransit services (funded through either the CFA Program or Wake Transit) should provide an option for passengers to schedule trips via an app or desktop computer, in addition to maintaining a call-in option for those without internet enabled devices. All Wake Transit funded microtransit services should also facilitate collection of data and service performance information via a dashboard or alternative report generating tool. To maximize customer convenience and service efficiency, interoperability between transit service providers' technology platforms is encouraged whenever possible.

Technology Solution	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Customer-Facing Software Platform	Passengers have access to a trip booking system via an app or desktop computer.	Required	Required
Scheduling and Vehicle Deployment Software	A software platform allowing transit agencies to assign trips to other systems.	Encouraged	Encouraged

Branding

Branding refers to the visual identity of the service, including the name, color scheme, and logo. Wake Transit partners have historically worked together to establish branding parameters that meet local and regional objectives. Most transit operators in the Triangle Region share the "Go" brand to tie services together and present common branding features for riders and members of the public. As more microtransit services have been implemented across the County, there is a continued desire for coordinated branding of local services to provide a consistent rider experience and set of expectations.

Agencies and communities should strive for microtransit service branding that is recognizable within the community as a Wake Transit service, consistent with operator and/or Wake Transit colors and naming conventions. This level of branding adoption is encouraged for CFA funded services in order to provide a level of flexibility in meeting local needs. If a transit provider is operating a microtransit service in a community as part of the agency's service offerings, branding consistency with colors, naming, and logo is required. However, if an agency is contracted to operate a service on behalf of a community as a local service option, incorporating the agency's branding is not required.

The Transit Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC) is developing a branding manual to include guidance for microtransit services. Until that manual is published, Wake Transit partners planning a new service or modifying an existing service must present their proposed branding package to the TPAC, or designated subcommittee, for review and discussion with partners to avoid potential conflicts. TPAC approval must be provided before a new branding package is finalized. As the Wake Transit branding policy is refined, guidelines will be updated accordingly and included in the TPAC branding manual.

Contracting Model

Contracting models refer to how public entities work with private transportation providers in the delivery of service.

Model Type	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Software as a Service	The service is operated using agency-owned vehicles and employed operators, but scheduling and dispatching software is purchased/contracted to manage trip booking, vehicle dispatching, and payment. Wake County communities may partner with transit agencies to operate agency vehicles through this model.	Encouraged	Encouraged
Turnkey Purchased Transportation	Hiring a private contractor to provide the vehicles, operators, and the software platform necessary to operate the service.	Encouraged	Encouraged
Non-Dedicated Transportation Providers*	Communities partner with transportation network companies (TNCs) like Lyft and Uber to provide trips and software platform. Agencies pay a portion of the fare.	Encouraged	Encouraged

If a TNC-style model is utilized, ADA accessibility requirements of the service will still apply. If a portion of the TNC fleet cannot be guaranteed ADA accessible, then the agency and/or community will provide an alternative option for seniors and passengers with disabilities to utilize if they need a vehicle with a ramp or lift.

Service Evaluation/Performance Measures

Services must be reviewed and evaluated annually to assess whether a microtransit service is successful, productive, financially sustainable, and meeting the goals of the Wake Transit Plan. Below are the performance measures to be assessed:

Evaluation Metric	Description	Suggested Benchmarks*
Ridership (weekday boardings)	The average number of passengers using the on-demand service per hour.	2-5 passengers per revenue hour
Cost per passenger trip	The cost per revenue hour divided by the average number of customers per hour.	$15-$30 per passenger trip
Wait time	The time between a trip booking and the arrival of a microtransit vehicle	30 min-customer wait times

* Community Funding Area projects will be assessed based on the performance targets established in the CFA Program Management Plan for demand-response services.

All transit services funded through the Wake Transit Plan and CFA Program are evaluated annually as part of a standardized performance review process. After an initial 24-month service initiation phase, microtransit programs not meeting the set performance measures will be evaluated for adjustment. On the other hand, microtransit programs that consistently exceed the performance standards will be evaluated to consider if partial or full conversion to fixed-route service would be appropriate.

Wake Transit partners are encouraged to use microtransit services to assess the potential for future fixed route transit. By identifying common origins and destinations, trip patterns, and ridership trends, microtransit operators can determine viable routes and service options for future fixed routes.

Planning for Microtransit

Transit planning typically follows a process that includes understanding markets and demand for transit (needs assessment), setting and prioritizing goals and evaluating service models relative to goals and needs. This document provides planning guidance to help communities in planning stages work towards service consistency by tying service goals to microtransit goals, objectives, and measures.

Wake Transit Funded Service

Wake Transit funded transit projects are identified through a robust planning process that begins with identifying countywide transit investment priorities (Wake Transit Plan), developing a multi-year service plan (Wake Bus Plan) and adopting an annual budget (Wake Transit Work Plan).

The table below provides guidelines for a planning process that must be undertaken prior to requesting funding for microtransit services. Additional goals, objectives, and measures may be included in the visioning and planning process for new microtransit services but are not required to qualify for Wake Transit Funding.

Wake Transit Funded Microtransit Planning Process Requirements		
Goal	**Objective**	**Measure**
Provide Enhanced Service	Improve service for current customers and/or attract and serve new customers.	Demonstrate how service can be provided at a higher level than what currently is available. Provide ridership estimates and description of methodology used to generate the estimate.
	Integrate with existing public transportation services.	Identify existing transit centers, routes, stops, etc., and detail how microtransit service will provide connections to the service network.
	Learn and test new strategies for leveraging technology to improve the customer experience.	Identify specific technology improvements for app-based trip scheduling, vehicle tracking, etc. the program will incorporate. The interoperability of microtransit service software platforms should be prioritized whenever possible, to allow for scheduling trips across platforms and services.
Connect People to Lifeline Service	Improve access to employment, healthcare, and other services.	Identify major destinations within the proposed service zone and detail how the microtransit service will improve access.
Design Equitable Service that Improves Access to Opportunity	Commit to a standard of service accessibility.	Ensure at least a portion of all vehicles are ADA accessible. If operating a stop or node-based microtransit service, boarding areas should be ADA accessible.

CFA Program Funded Services

The CFA Program recognizes local needs by design; service design and development should be based in community needs, priorities, and preferences. In addition to service and infrastructure funding, the CFA Program also provides matching funds for planning efforts which provides support to communities to evaluate travel needs, including the size and distribution of the highest need residents as well as evaluate various strategies and ways to provide transit services.

Once community priorities are established, the service model, including recommendations for microtransit service, should both reflect these priorities and set specific goals and objectives for the service, as well as a strategy to track and measure success. Potential goals, objectives and measures are listed here for reference:

CFA Program Funded Microtransit Planning Process Requirements		
Goal	**Objective**	**Measure and Output**
Provide Enhanced Service	Improve service for current customers and/or attract and serve new customers.	**Measure:** Demonstrate how service is being improved over current systems and/or being utilized to attract and serve new customers. **Output:** Provide ridership estimates and description of methodology used.
	Integrate with existing public transportation services.	**Measure:** Detail how microtransit service will provide connections to the current service network. **Output:** Identify existing transit centers, routes, stops, etc., within proposed microtransit service zone.
	Learn and test new strategies for leveraging technology to improve customer experience.	**Measure:** The service should include the ability to book trips via an app, on desktop and by phone call. **Output:** Identify specific technology platforms for trip booking, vehicle tracking, etc. that the service will incorporate. **The interoperability of microtransit service software platforms should be prioritized whenever possible, to allow for scheduling trips across platforms and services.*
Connect People to Lifeline Services	Improve access to employment, healthcare, and other services.	**Measure:** The microtransit service improves/provides access to lifeline service destinations. **Output:** Identify specific lifeline destinations within the proposed service zone.
Design Equitable Service that Improves Access to Opportunity	Serve high need communities.	**Measure:** The microtransit service reaches populations with higher transportation needs. **Output:** Identify areas within the service zone containing high concentrations of key demographic groups and socioeconomic characteristics (see CAMPO's "communities of concern" maps).

	Commit to a standard of service accessibility.	**Measure:** Ensure a portion of vehicles are ADA accessible. **Output:** Document total number of service vehicles required and the ratio of accessible to non-accessible vehicles. **If operating a stop or node-based microtransit service model, boarding areas should be ADA accessible wherever possible.*
Create a Sustainable Service Model	Understand the financial and technical feasibility of on-demand mobility options.	**Measure:** Develop a multi-year operating and capital plan for the microtransit service. **Output:** Provide an operating and capital plan that identifies initial costs for program set-up, ongoing operation, and capital improvements. This includes vehicle type, number of vehicles, hours of operation, and service frequency and/or vehicle response time, an infrastructure support needs.
	Incorporate travel demand data into program planning (and later, evaluation) to understand transit demand and travel flows.	**Measure:** Identify major travel demand flows across the proposed service area zone. **Output:** Perform and document a travel demand analysis to help establish major destinations that must be included in the service zone.
	Identify a dedicated, consistent funding source.	**Measure:** Identify a dedicated, sustained local funding source for the microtransit service. **Output:** Provide documentation of local matching funds earmarked/approved to pay the local share of the service.
	Develop a phased implementation strategy that accommodates increased demand and productivity of a microtransit system over time.	**Measure:** Identify ridership and/or financial thresholds that would warrant potential scaling-up of a microtransit service from door-to-door, to node-to-node, and/or fixed route service. **Output:** Document operating and capital program costs and assumed ridership, vehicle needs, and service hours the budget would support. Identify potential thresholds that would warrant program adjustments to maintain service quality and financial feasibility.