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 flexible, shared-ride transportation service that uses enhanced technology to allow passengers to request on-demand trips in multi-passenger vehicles:

How Microtransit Works

- Passengers contact the transit agency via 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 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 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 authority 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.
- 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 becoming a 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 transit services have been utilizing varied technologies and service models to best fit the needs of the communities in Wake County

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 people with disabilities.

The early success of microtransit systems in Wake County communities 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.

Guidelines are focused on two aspects of service: 1) design, operations, and passenger systems and 2) evaluation and measurement and help determine which funding bucket microtransit services will be funded from, the general Wake Transit Plan, or the Community Funding Area Program (CFA), which is a funding mechanism established within the larger Wake Transit Plan.

Wake County Transit Funding

Wake Transit Plan funds can be used to conduct service/planning studies, operate service, 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 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 investments consistent with the levels of investment before Wake Transit Plan funds were available. In addition, Wake Transit Plan funding generally has a higher level of operational consistency required (agency sponsor, minimum service spans, frequencies, fares, etc.) and service

performance standards as compared with the CFA program.

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

   Wake County is expected to be eligible for CFA funds in FY26.

Local communities must fund at least 35% of the cost of service, with the CFA program funding 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 more consistency across all services.

There are two potential funding paths for microtranist services—the Wake Transit Plan or the CFA program. In most cases, CFA-eligible communities will fund a microtransit service through the CFA program, however an exception to this rule occurs when a Wake Transit Plan-funded fixed route consistently does not meet Wake Transit performance standards. In these cases, communities may work with Wake Transit 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 back to fixed-route service.

MICROTRANSIT 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	
Optional	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 optional. 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 different funding paths, identified:

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

Microtransit Service Standards

Service goals are established to identify successful transit markets and address mobility challenges, while service standards determine minimum operational characteristics and performance expectations. The standards and goals outlined 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 standards 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 the rider up outside their door (curb-to-curb) or if the service requires travelers to walk to a specific location (node based or designated stops).

Service Type	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded*
Curb-to-Curb	Customers are dropped off as close as possible to requested destination.	Optional	Optional
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 "stops" or "stations" typically have some level of passenger amenities.	Optional	Optional
Corner-to-Corner	Customers are dropped at the nearest safe must walk a short distance to nearby intersection (whenever possible, locations should be selected based on their safe walking conditions for pedestrians).	Optional	Optional

Operating Characteristics

Operating characteristics refer to the way the service works, including days and hours of operation as well as customer wait times.[1] The Wake Transit Plan is working towards consistent operating characteristics so riders can expect a similar level of service across all operators.

Technology Solution	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Span	Service provided at least 12 hours per weekday.	Required	Required
	Service span matches the span of the connecting transit service.	Optional	Required
Customer Wait Times	Passenger wait times should not exceed 20 minutes, with <10% of trips being missed or late (late trips being defined as anything more than 10 minutes beyond promised pickup window).	Optional	Required
Service Availability	Weekdays	Required	Required
	Saturdays	Optional	Optional
	Sundays	Optional	Optional

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

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[1] For microtransit services, a rider's wait is measured in the time between a trip request and the arrival of a microtransit vehicle. Whereas for fixed route transit services, a rider's wait is measured in service frequency.

Trip Booking Systems	Provide systems to book trips that are available to people with different abilities, such as apps with screen-readers and call centers.	Required	Required
Facility Accessibility	All stops should be ADA accessible with a paved concrete boarding area. All stops built using Wake Transit funds are required to be ADA accessible. If a microtransit system is curb-to-curb, operators should guarantee a stop at the nearest safe, ADA accessible location for passengers to exit and board the vehicle.	Optional	Required

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.[2] A clear fare policy that is consistent across operators helps riders by making services easier to understand.

Fare Policy	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Fare Free	Service operates with no fare and with no plans to introduce a fare.	Optional	Optional
Fare Free Pilot	Implemented with initial fare-free phase, but with planned implementation of fare structure. End date must be established in initial planning phase.	Optional	Optional
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.	Optional	N/A
Base Fare	Microtransit base fare must be equivalent to the Wake Transit Plan regional fare structure.	Optional	Required

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

Technology System/Platform

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 and allow for 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' systems and scheduling platforms is encouraged whenever possible.

Technology Solution	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Customer-Facing Software Platform	Passengers have access 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 trip to other systems.	Optional	Optional

Branding

Branding refers to the visual identity of the service, including the name, color scheme, and logo. Most transit operators in the Triangle Region share the "Go" brand to tie services together and common branding for riders and members of the public. Whenever possible, agencies and communities should strive for microtransit services that are recognizable within the community as a Wake Transit service. As the Wake Transit branding policy is refined, guidelines will be updated accordingly.

Branding Approach	Description	CFA Program Funded	Wake Transit Funded
Wake Transit	Wake Transit-specific service branding—utilizing Wake Transit colors and logo.	Optional	Optional

		Optional	Optional
Community-Specific	Community logo, colors, service name are used to identify vehicles and on service materials with no ties to Wake Transit branding or operating agency branding.	Optional	Optional
Operator Branding	Consistent with operating agency branding (logo, colors, service name similar to operating agency service name).	Optional	Required

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.	Optional	Optional
Turnkey Purchased Transportation	Hiring a private contractor to provide the vehicles, operators, and the software platform necessary to operate the service.	Optional	Optional
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.	Optional	Optional

Service Evaluation

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 service standards 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 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 deviation between the pickup window provided to passengers when booking and the actual time they were picked up.	10-20 min customer wait times

*Microtransit services consistently operating above suggested benchmarks should consider partial or full conversion to fixed route service.

After an initial 24-month service initiation phase, microtransit programs not meeting thresholds for successful service operation will be evaluated for discontinuation. However, microtransit programs that consistently exceed performance targets—reaching ridership, wait time, and trip time levels that threaten to diminish customer experience—will be examined for partial or full replacement with fixed route and conversion from the CFA program to being funded and evaluated through the Wake Transit Plan.

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 typing service goals to microtransit goals, objectives, and measures.

Wake Transit Funded Service

Wake Transit funds transit projects are identified through a planning process that includes defining regional transit investment priorities (Wake Transit Vision Plan), a multi-year operating plan (Wake Bus Plan) and an annual work planning process. Project sponsors with projects that meet regional priorities may submit them for funding through the annual work planning process.

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 is being 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. The CFA Program also provides planning grants, which provide resources for communities to evaluate travel needs, including the size and distribution of the highest need residents as well as evaluate different 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. **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 the customer experience.	**Measure:** The service should include the ability to book trips via an app. **Output:** Identify specific technology improvements 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 Service	Improve access to employment, healthcare, and other services.	**Measure:** The microtransit service improves access to major destinations. **Output:** Identify specific major 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 Wake Transit's "communities of concern").

	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.
	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.