

September 2023

## High-frequency, On-time, User-friendly Rail Service (HOURS)

### Grant Funding Opportunity

The FY2023 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program is a USDOT discretionary grant program comprised of the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) program (established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) and the Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) program (established by the Inflation Reduction Act).

GoTriangle is developing an application for a Regional Partnerships Challenge (RPC) grant, under the NAE program. GoTriangle is currently identifying co-applicants, as the grant program requires at least two applicants. The grant will be evaluated on seven merit criteria:

1. Equity and Environmental Justice
2. Access
3. Facility Suitability
4. Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnership
5. Equitable Development
6. Climate and Environment
7. Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity

USDOT expects to award three to five RPC grants, up to \$450 million, to support regional collaboration and innovation. RPC grants can support projects with planning activities or construction activities. Projects of this type are eligible for up to 80% federal funding participation. The deadline for grant applications is September 28, 2023.

### Project Purpose

The High-frequency, On-time, User-friendly Rail Service (HOURS) Project will seek planning funds in order to take meaningful steps forward toward implementing a transformative regional rail transit program along the existing North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) corridor in Durham and Wake counties with potential future expansion into Orange and Johnston counties.

A successful application would demonstrate the viability of the regional rail concept for receiving federal funding and would significantly extend the capacity of local dollars to support early implementation activities.

### Cost and Schedule

The budget for the HOURS Project is expected to be in the range of \$25 million to \$35 million. There is no deadline for spending funding received under the RCN Program. The expected timeline for completing the HOURS Project is four to five years.

### Project Components

The project would build upon work completed by GoTriangle and Central Pines Regional Council (formerly Triangle J Council of Governments) in collaboration with CAMPO, DCHC MPO, Durham County, Wake County, Johnston County, NCDOT, and NCRR during the recent feasibility study. The scope of work for this grant application includes:

#### Implementation Planning and Agreement Development

1. *Coordination and involvement of a large number of stakeholders*, including NCDOT, NCRR, MPOs, local jurisdictions, universities, and other organizations.
2. Developing a *Regional Rail Strategic Plan* outlining a vision, mission, and objectives, as well as identifying roles and responsibilities of GoTriangle, NCDOT, NCRR, and other parties for implementing regional rail in the Triangle.
3. Expanding the initial *rail network modeling* to evaluate all-day hourly or better service, building upon previously completed work and coordinating with NCDOT Corridor Identification efforts for expanded intercity service.
4. Developing *framework agreements with railroad parties and other organizations* to support incremental implementation and provide a pathway to successfully address issues with potential impacts on project viability, cost, and schedule.
5. *Monitoring the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program*, which is administered by the FTA to fund major capital expenses for large transit projects, *and other grant opportunities for implementation elements* of the Regional Rail Strategic Plan.

#### Design, Public Engagement, Environmental Review, and Program Management

6. Conducting *preliminary engineering to 30% design* to support implementation of the Regional Rail Strategic Plan, including infrastructure, stations, and systems.
7. *Cost estimating* at 10% and 30% design.
8. Conducting *risk management* workshops including critical third parties to monitor and reduce risks to implementation and limit exposure to cost increases and schedule delays.
9. Conducting *public engagement* and *environmental analysis* to support implementation of the Regional Rail Strategic Plan.
10. *Right-of-way planning* and identification of parcels along the corridor that will require future property owner coordination.
11. Conducting *resilience planning* to understand future vulnerabilities and sensitivities and develop strategies to achieve resilience goals.

#### Collaboration with Stakeholders for Corridor Planning

12. Planning for *connections to the Raleigh-Durham International Airport*.
13. Planning for *neighborhood access and community cohesion*.
14. Providing regional coordination and support for municipal efforts for *transit-oriented development and affordable housing* in the corridor.
15. Support for jurisdictions conducting *station area planning*.
16. *Coordinating with local transit agencies* to identify opportunities for integration between rail services and other transportation modes.