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Wake Transit Plan Update (2030) Draft Project Prioritization Guidance

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

In February of 2020, five (5) financial scenarios ranging from those using very conservative assumptions to those using optimistic assumptions were developed to help Wake Transit partners understand Wake Transit's financial capabilities through 2030. These scenarios delineated a cone of uncertainty, similar to those developed for hurricane forecasting, that represented a range of future financial outcomes and within which Wake Transit's future financial capabilities are most likely to fall. At that time, forecast results indicated there was a good chance there would be capacity for new investment in the additional three (3) years being added to the Wake County Transit Plan's horizon beyond what the 2016 Wake County Transit Plan originally committed.

Accounting for the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in cost and schedule assumptions for planned major capital projects, revenue assumptions for the five (5) scenarios were revisited in May/June of 2020. A comparison of these financial scenarios to those generated in February revealed an anticipated reduction of between \$107 million and \$248 million in sales tax collections through 2030. Since June of 2020, actual sales tax collections data for March through June were obtained and revealed that collections did indeed fall during that time, but they did not fall as severely as most of the scenarios originally projected. While revenue assumptions and other inputs to the financial scenarios will be revisited and updated in October to account for this, current indications still suggest that there will likely be a need to use revenue collections for the additional three (3) years being added to the Wake County Transit Plan horizon to reschedule Wake Transit implementation elements through 2030. Current indications also suggest that it is still very possible that investments previously scheduled for delivery through 2027 will need to be cut even after accounting for these three (3) additional years of revenue collections.

PUBLIC/STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON PRIORITIES

Through the months of August and September, CAMPO and its Wake Transit partners solicited input from the public and targeted stakeholders on investment priorities. The input was provided through a public survey and live interactive polling of stakeholders that was designed to receive responses to various investment tradeoffs that have competing objectives and that tie to the objectives of the implementation elements previously scheduled for delivery through 2027. The results of this input were used to heavily inform the direction of the prioritization guidance outlined in this document.

PRIORITIZATION BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

Prioritization of Wake Transit implementation elements through the new planning horizon of 2030 is the first step of a wholesale reprogramming process. All projects and implementation elements previously programmed under the Wake County Transit Plan through 2027 have been studied, planned, vetted, and considered as worthy projects within the applicable financial constraint. Prioritization does not determine whether projects are important or worthy. It is ultimately a reevaluation of the relative importance of implementation elements that is informed by past and recent public and stakeholder input, input from project sponsors, and adopted program-level prioritization policies and guidance.

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The overall lens through which to view prioritization in the context of preparing for reprogramming is to consider it an exercise in allocating or ‘carving out’ financial capacity for implementation elements in a certain logical order within a set financial constraint. Higher priority implementation elements are assigned available financial resources within the financial constraint first, and lower priority elements are assigned available financial resources last. There is no explicit temporal element to this ordering, as project scheduling falls to the next step of programming. Other considerations that prioritization does not address and does not mean to address at this stage in the process are project readiness, past performance of related or similar projects, or synchronization of interrelated projects. These are programming considerations that will be addressed during the reprogramming phase of the plan update process.

DRAFT PRIORITIZATION OF WAKE TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENTS

Following is an outline representing a draft logical ordering of prioritized implementation elements for presentation to the TPAC at its October 14th regular meeting. Financial capacity within the 2030 financial constraint will be reserved in the following order:

TIER 1: Continued Funding for Community Funding Area Program as Currently Programmed and Funding Programmed for Rural Elderly/Disabled and General Public Demand-Response Trips (GoWake Access Allocations)

The results of the Wake Transit priorities public and stakeholder outreach revealed that there is still a notable desire to support expanding services that provide greater geographic access to transit throughout the county, particularly among low-income, non-white, non-transit user, and suburban/rural survey respondents. Both the Community Funding Area Program and the expansion of GoWake Access demand-response trips throughout the less densely populated areas of the county would directly support this emphasis on coverage services and do not collectively require a large amount of financial resources within the 2030 financial constraint, particularly since Community Funding Area-eligible municipalities contribute a minimum of 50 percent of the funding for applicable services. Although the targeted stakeholders that participated in recent engagement disproportionately represented interests with more of a coverage and geographic access focus, of modal priorities represented in the Wake County Transit Plan, coverage bus services ranked on par with or ever so slightly higher than high-frequency bus services.

Further, unlike Wake County’s fixed-route service providers, Community Funding Area-eligible municipalities have not received funding for these coverage-oriented services in the first three (3) years of Wake Transit Plan implementation and have only recently been able to take advantage of Wake Transit funds to develop and implement services.

TIER 2: Capital Projects with Design or Land Acquisition Phases Already Initiated, for Which Later Phases Should Be Funded to Keep Their Momentum

A number of Wake Transit-funded capital projects have been allocated funding for early phases of development in FYs 2018-2020, such as for design and land acquisition for the development of facilities that support existing and future transit services. It is important that we allow projects that have received funding for these phases of work to proceed to later

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phases, such as construction, to keep their momentum for ultimately being delivered and to avoid unnecessary stoppages in work that could jeopardize their progress.

Projects that fall into this tier include:

Town of Cary:

- 1) Cary Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility Construction
- 2) Downtown Cary Multimodal Transit Facility Construction

City of Raleigh:

- 1) East Raleigh Transit Center Construction
- 2) GoRaleigh/GoWake Access Paratransit Operations & Maintenance Facility Design and Construction
- 3) Transfer Point Construction:
 - a. Cross Link/Rock Quarry
 - b. Hillsborough/Gorman
 - c. Hillsborough/State Fairgrounds
 - d. Hillsborough/Jones Franklin

TIER 3: Facilities/Infrastructure/Resources Needed to Support Future Expansion or General State of Good Repair and Operations

The adopted Wake Bus Plan Project Prioritization Policy places an emphasis on prioritizing critical systemwide investments to support existing and expansion services within the plan's financial constraint. Certain investments are necessary to simply maintain system operations in a state of good repair and order, irrespective of future service expansion, and work to ensure the entire system rests on a solid foundation to support future growth.

Projects that fall into this tier include:

Town of Cary:

- 1) FY 21 Staff Request?

City of Raleigh:

- 1) Fixed Route Replacement Vehicles
- 2) Paratransit Replacement Vehicles
- 3) Expansion of Compressed Natural Gas Fueling Station
- 4) Support Vehicles

GoTriangle:

- 1) New Regional Transit Center Facility Design, Land Acquisition, and Construction
- 2) Paratransit Replacement Vehicles
- 3) Purchase/Repower Vehicles (those for replacements only)
- 4) Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility (Wake Share)

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- 5) Wake Bus Plan Update
- 6) FY 21 Staff Requests?

CAMPO:

- 1) Major Investment Study/Alternatives Analysis for BRT Extensions to RTP and Clayton

TIER 4: Projects That Involve Time-Sensitive External Grant Sources as Part of Their Overall Funding Mechanism (i.e., LAPP or other federal sources)

Over the past four (4) years, project sponsors have worked to expand the overall funding footprint of the Wake Transit program by using Wake Transit funding to leverage external grant sources. In these cases, commitments were made in external grant funding applications that Wake Transit funding would be used as the necessary matching funds. To honor this expansion of the Wake Transit program's overall funding footprint, projects for which Wake Transit funding was committed as a necessary match should be given a high level of priority for reserving financial capacity within the 2030 financial constraint.

GoRaleigh:

- 1) Transfer Point Design/Construction:
 - a. Capital/Millbrook
 - b. WakeMed North
 - c. Pleasant Valley Shopping Center

GoTriangle:

- 1) FY 21 Unbudgeted Reserve Bus Stop Improvements (At least \$64,800 to match LAPP grant)

TIER 5: Wake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Program of Projects:

Right-of-Way Acquisition, Construction, Vehicle Procurement, and Operations in the following order for:

- Western Corridor (includes extension to Morrisville/RTP; extension would likely use Route 310 resources for future implementation element);
- Southern Corridor (includes extension to Clayton); and
- Northern Corridor

The full program of BRT corridors was a signature component of the frequent and reliable urban mobility 'big move' in the 2016 Wake County Transit Plan. The adopted Wake Bus Plan Project Prioritization Policy places an emphasis on ensuring that projects "promised" in the Wake County Transit Plan can be delivered by ensuring appropriate financial capacity is available to these projects and that other bus operating and capital investments are geared toward maximizing and optimizing the effectiveness of larger capital and service investments as much as possible. Further, public and stakeholder priorities as revealed

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through recent engagement suggests that the Wake BRT corridors, combined with other bus service augmentations and expansion in the Wake County Transit Plan, most prominently advance the more desired objectives while also providing some balance with competing objectives that are still deemed important.

The Wake BRT corridors place more emphasis on ridership, productivity, speed, reliability, and directness of travel than on coverage or geographic access. However, when compared to other high-capacity or fixed-guideway investments, BRT service generally provides more balance between these objectives by being more accessible as a result of higher stop/station densities. Public and stakeholder priorities together reveal that there is a need for balance between local travel needs (within cities and towns) and regional travel needs (between cities and towns). The Wake BRT corridors collectively provide this balance when compared to other high-capacity modes by providing a market for serving a multitude of trip purposes, including employment and education commuting and general-purpose personal trips, within both a local setting and among cities, towns, and communities.

Public and stakeholder priorities together also reveal that there is a need for balance between investment in service versus investment in infrastructure. The Wake BRT corridors collectively provide this balance by incorporating an abundance of speed-enhancing and customer convenience-supportive infrastructure while also making use of that infrastructure to provide an abundance of high-frequency, all-day service for multiple markets and trip purposes. The market that commuter rail generally serves tends to be more targeted toward daily employment or education commuters and can be more efficient at serving a higher volume of those commuters than BRT. However, commuter rail also tends to involve a much greater investment in infrastructure. Of all modal priorities represented in the Wake County Transit Plan, BRT is the highest ranked priority among the targeted stakeholder participants recently engaged.

TIER 6: Commuter Rail Project Design, Right-of-Way/Land Acquisition, Construction, Vehicle Procurement, and Operations

The commuter rail corridor was a signature component of the connecting regionally 'big move' in the 2016 Wake County Transit Plan. The adopted Wake Transit Bus Plan Project Prioritization Policy places an emphasis on ensuring that projects "promised" in the Wake County Transit Plan can be delivered by ensuring appropriate financial capacity is available to these projects and that supporting bus operating and capital investments are geared toward maximizing and optimizing the effectiveness of larger capital and service investments as much as possible. Further, public and stakeholder priorities as revealed through recent engagement suggests that a commuter rail project, combined with other bus service augmentations and expansion in the Wake County Transit Plan, remains an investment priority.

A commuter rail project puts a significant amount of emphasis on ridership, productivity, speed, reliability, and directness of travel rather than on coverage or geographic access. When compared to the BRT mode, commuter rail provides considerably less balance between these objectives with lower station/stop densities resulting in fewer opportunities for access. However, commuter rail must be designed this way to maximize its speed, reliability, directness of travel, and productivity benefits. Public and stakeholder priorities together reveal that there is a need for balance between local travel needs (within cities and towns) and regional travel needs (between cities and towns). However, public survey

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results alone suggest a slightly stronger preference for regional needs over local needs overall. A commuter rail projects puts a significant amount of emphasis on regional travel needs rather than on local travel needs.

In sum, commuter rail is an investment that exhibits an 'all-in' approach to providing most of what public survey respondents generally favored overall, with much less balance between those objectives and competing objectives that are still deemed important. An exception to this is the public's overall preference toward service over infrastructure. Nonetheless, much of that balance can still be provided with other modes identified for investment in the Wake County Transit Plan in conjunction with a commuter rail project.

Of all modal priorities represented in the Wake County Transit Plan, commuter rail was the second highest ranked priority among the targeted stakeholder participants recently engaged.

TIER 7: Systemwide Bus Stop Improvements for Already Served Corridors/Stop Locations

Public and stakeholder input received through recent priorities outreach strongly suggests that infrastructure connecting to transit is a high priority throughout Wake County, particularly among low-income populations. Input received over the past four (4) years in response to annual Wake Transit Work Plans also supports this investment priority. While there is a recognition that infrastructure connecting to transit, such as pedestrian facilities and bikeways, is not fully the responsibility of Wake Transit tax revenues to support, there is clearly a preference for as much emphasis as possible to be placed on this investment focus within the current means of the Wake Transit program.

TIER 8: Fixed-Route Bus Service Improvements and Corresponding Infrastructure That Ties to Bus Service Improvements/Expansion

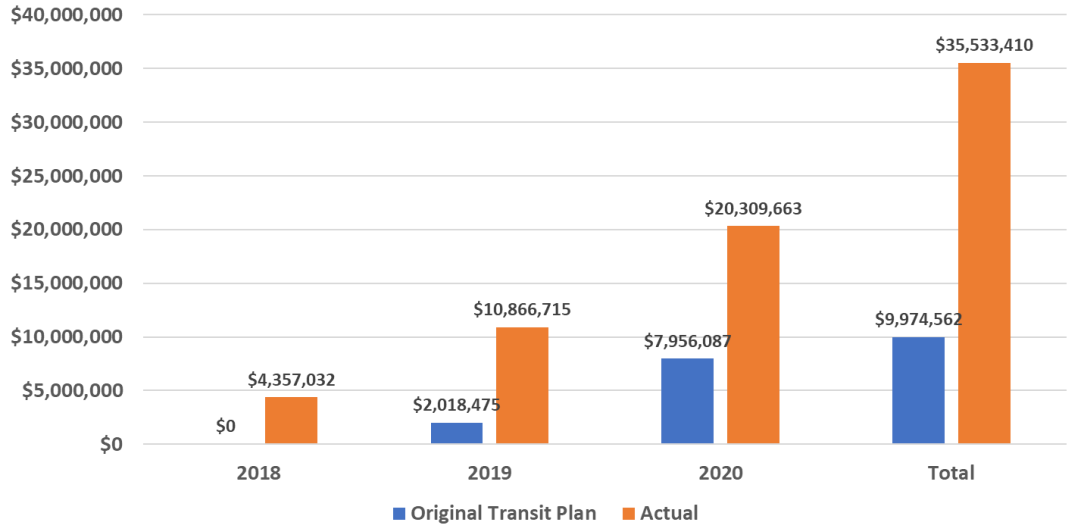
While fixed-route bus services have the ability to advance many of the priorities suggested by the results of recent public and stakeholder input, depending on their design, Wake Transit-funded bus service implementation was accelerated ahead of its original outlay in the 2016 Wake County Transit Plan. A number of bus service improvements that strike a balance between those that are ridership- and productivity-oriented and those that are coverage- and geographic access-oriented were advanced beginning in FY 2018 and added in every subsequent year to date. Following is a graphic showing bus service spending for the first three (3) full fiscal years of plan implementation compared to what was originally assumed in the 2016 Wake County Transit Plan:

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Original Plan Vs. Actual Bus Service Funding Allocations



The total difference in spending between actual investment and original assumptions through the first three (3) years of plan implementation was \$25,558,848. Carried out over the 10-year financial constraint between FY 21 and FY 30, this earlier-than-scheduled investment in bus services is even more impactful than what can be exhibited in the first three (3) years because these services are assumed to be an ongoing recurring cost through the 10-year horizon and, as a result, the long-term impact balloons over time. The most important takeaway from this point is that the bus service implementation component of the Wake County Transit Plan is already well ahead of schedule, and earlier-than-scheduled implementation has created an even stronger need to preserve financial capacity for other components of the original plan, including for BRT, commuter rail, and other essential capital investments.

Further, the adopted Wake Transit Bus Plan Project Prioritization Policy places an emphasis on ensuring that projects “promised” in the Wake County Transit Plan can be delivered by ensuring appropriate financial capacity is available to these projects and that supporting bus operating and capital investments are geared toward maximizing and optimizing the effectiveness of larger capital and service investments as much as possible. This supports the approach of reserving financial capacity for fixed-route bus services and capital investments tied to those services after first reserving said capacity for the BRT and commuter rail corridors. It also supports an approach of building a bus network that augments the performance of those larger and more impactful investments.

For this category of investments, two different methods were proposed as options to lay out a ranking of bus service improvements and expansion implementation elements.

Method 1:

The first method consisted of scoring and ranking routes using the adopted Wake Bus Plan Project Prioritization Policy and then adjusting those rankings based on internal prioritization provided by project sponsors. All scored routes were assigned to three different tiers of priority based on their raw scores: high scoring priorities (> 40), medium

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scoring priorities (34-40), and low scoring priorities (< 34). Then the rankings of implementation elements within those tiers were reordered to match the internal prioritization of implementation elements provided by project sponsors. Only routes within each tier, as opposed to routes between tiers, were reordered. This was done to maintain the overall integrity of the adopted project prioritization policy.

Scoring for both Methods 1 and 2 was applied to individual routes rather than to route packages that are currently portrayed in the FY 21 Wake Transit Work Plan multi-year operating program. Both Methods 1 and 2 also scored applicable routes as if the entire route buildout was being scored rather than a smaller implementation element that advances a piece of full route buildout. Following are the raw scores and associated rankings of individual implementation elements generated by the methodology outlined in the adopted Wake Bus Project Prioritization Policy:

Method 1 Scores and Rankings

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Route 20: Garner (54)	Route 31: Southwest (40)	Route 33: New Hope-Knightdale (32)
Route 3: Glascock (51)	Route 8L: Six Forks North (40)	Route 16: Centennial-Midtown (32)
Route 310: RTC-Cary (51)	Route 32: Lynn Spring Forest (39)	Route 24: New Hope-Crabtree (32)
Route 5: Biltmore Hills (49)	Route 9B: Buck Jones (38)	Route 27: Blue Ridge (32)
Route 11: Avent Ferry Improvements (48)	Route 28: New Hope-Triangle (37)	Route 6L: Glenwood North (31)
Route 9: Hillsborough Street (48)	Route 2: Falls of Neuse (37)	Route 23: Millbrook (29)
Route 8: Six Forks Midtown (46)	Route 34: Wake Tech North (36)	Route 25: Durant (29)
Route 305: Apex-Raleigh (44)	Route 9A: Hillsborough-Trinity (36)	Route 6La: Glenwood P.V. (27)
Route 6: Glenwood (43)	Route 2L: Falls of Neuse North (35)	Route 29: Garner-Wake Tech (26)
Route 10: Raleigh Blvd (41)	Route 14: Atlantic (34)	Route 100: Raleigh-RDU-RTC (25)
Route 20L: Garner South (41)	Route 12: Method (34)	

Following are the rankings of individual implementation elements with the rankings adjusted using internal prioritization of applicable routes by project sponsors:

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Route 21: Caraleigh Improvements	Route 28: New Hope-Triangle	Route 6L: Glenwood North
Route 3: Glascock		Route 6La: Glenwood P.V.
Route 9: Hillsborough Street	Route 14: Atlantic	Route 16: Centennial-Midtown
Route 305: Apex-Raleigh	Route 12: Method	Route 24: New Hope-Crabtree
Route 20: Garner	Route 9B: Buck Jones	Route 25: Durant
Route 5: Biltmore Hills	Route 8L: Six Forks North	Route 23: Millbrook
Route 20L: Garner South	Route 32: Lynn-Spring Forest	Route 29: Garner-Wake Tech
Route 10: Raleigh Blvd	Route 2: Falls of Neuse	Route 27: Blue Ridge
Route 310: RTC-Cary	Route 2L: Falls of Neuse North	Route 33: New Hope-Knightdale
Route 6: Glenwood	Route 9A: Hillsborough-Trinity	Route 100: Raleigh-RDU-RTC
Route 11: Avent Ferry	Route 31: Southwest	
Route 8: Six Forks Midtown	Route 34: Wake Tech North	

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Method 2:

Method 2 consisted of first ranking routes, or packages of routes as portrayed in the FY 21 Wake Transit Work Plan multi-year operating program, using each project sponsor’s internal prioritization. Then the routes’ raw scores from the project prioritization policy were used to determine how to rank order routes or route packages among the three (3) different project sponsors. This method used the scoring of individual routes to determine the rank order of implementation elements. However, the method combined individual routes into the route packages within which they fit as portrayed in the FY 21 Wake Transit Work Plan multi-year operating program and used the highest scoring route of the package to control where it ultimately landed within the rank ordering.

Because GoRaleigh is represented as the project sponsor for over ¾ of the routes or route packages, the general approach taken for Method 2 was it first ranked all of GoRaleigh’s routes or route packages in the order GoRaleigh prioritized them. In many cases throughout GoRaleigh’s prioritized list of routes, GoRaleigh ranked routes or route packages that received lower raw scores from the project prioritization policy methodology higher than other GoRaleigh routes or route packages that received higher raw scores, which Method 2 honors. Then the routes from GoCary and GoTriangle were added to the list in a rank position based on those routes’ raw scores relative to GoRaleigh’s routes’ raw scores in a manner in which, in no case, a GoRaleigh route or route package with a lower raw score ranked ahead of a GoCary or GoTriangle route with a higher raw score.

Following are the rankings of the individual bus service implementation elements using Method 2:

Rank	Route/Implementation Element	Project Sponsor
1	Route 21: Caraleigh Improvements	GoRaleigh
2	Route 3: Glascock Improvements	GoRaleigh
3	Route 310: RTC-Cary Improvements	GoTriangle/TBD (Future BRT)
4	Route 9: Hillsborough (possible need to program with GoCary Route 9A)	GoRaleigh
5	Route 305: Holly Springs/Apex/Raleigh Improvements	GoTriangle
6	Route 5: Biltmore Hills/Route 20: Garner Improvements	GoRaleigh
7	Route 10: Raleigh Blvd	GoRaleigh
8	Route 9B: Buck Jones Improvements	GoCary
9	Route 28: New Hope-Triangle	GoRaleigh
10	Route 14: Atlantic	GoRaleigh
11	Route 12: Method Improvements	GoRaleigh
12	Route 9A: Hillsborough-Trinity (if not programmed with GoRaleigh Route 9)	GoCary
13	Routes 6/6L: Glenwood/Glenwood North	GoRaleigh
14	Route 11: Avent Ferry Improvements	GoRaleigh
15	Routes 8/8L/16: Oberlin/Six Forks Route Package	GoRaleigh
16	Route 24: New Hope-Crabtree	GoRaleigh
17	Routes 2/2L/25/32: Falls of Neuse Route Package	GoRaleigh
18	Route 31: Southwest	GoRaleigh
19	Route 27: Blue Ridge Frequency Improvements	GoRaleigh

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20	Route 33: Knightdale Weekend Service	GoRaleigh
21	Route 34: Wake Tech North	GoRaleigh
22	Route 29: Garner-Wake Tech	GoRaleigh
23	Route 23: Millbrook	GoRaleigh
24	Route 100 Improvements	GoTriangle
25	Route NRX Improvements	GoTriangle

Method 2 was selected by both GoCary and GoRaleigh as the preferred method for prioritizing bus services and corresponding capital investments.

Through the project verification and internal prioritization process, CAMPO and the Town of Cary have determined that the following routes can be eliminated from the 2030 financial constraint:

- 1) New Morrisville-Cary Route – **GoCary**
- 2) New Cary-Airport Route – **GoCary**

Following are the types of projects or implementation elements to be coordinated with bus service expansion in accordance with project sponsors' internal prioritization:

- 1) Maintenance of Bus Stops and Park and Ride Facilities
- 2) Fixed Route Expansion Vehicles
- 3) Paratransit Expansion Vehicles
- 4) Bus Stop Improvements for New Stop Locations or Routes Serving New Locations
- 5) New Transit Centers
- 6) Transit Center Updates
- 7) New Park and Ride Facilities
- 8) Transfer Point Improvements
- 9) Existing Park and Ride Lot Improvements
- 10) ADA Operations