Information Packet for Concurrence Points 3-4
CAMPO Concurrence Process Meeting for
Wake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): Western BRT Corridor
Friday, October 16, 2020 (10:30am-12:00pm)
Virtual

Agenda

- Introductions
- Brief review of CAMPO's Concurrence Process
    - Agency roles (Participating versus Cooperating)
- Review of Project Background/Explanation
- Review of Concurrence Points 1 and 2
- Concurrence Point 3: Screening of Alternatives / Elimination of Alternatives
- Concurrence Point 4: Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Recommendation
- Next Steps

Concurrence Team Members:

Project Sponsor: City of Raleigh (with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as funding partner)

Cooperating Agencies to be Invited:

- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- North Carolina Department of Transportation
- North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources – State Historic Preservation Office
- North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality
- Town of Cary
- North Carolina State University

Participating Agencies to be Invited:

- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- Wake County
- GoTriangle
- Town of Garner
- Town of Morrisville
- Research Triangle Foundation
- Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO

Wake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): Western BRT Corridor
Supporting Information for CAMPO's Concurrence Process

Explanation of CAMPO's Concurrence Process

Concurrence is a process in which Sponsors of major Wake Transit Capital Projects may, with respect to such Projects, verify compliance with: Laws, regulations, and policies enacted and/or enforced by agencies having regulatory authority over a resource or interest that may be substantially impacted by the project. The Concurrence Process arises at key project milestones throughout: (1) Project development and permitting and, if applicable to the project, (2) Final design, right-of-way/land acquisition, construction, or other subsequent phases. These milestones, or points, are known as Concurrence Points.

Concurrence Points are distinct to the nature and magnitude of impacts anticipated for each project. Specific sequential Concurrence Points are identified in a project-specific Concurrence Plan. Concurrence Points cumulatively build over the course of project development and subsequent phases such that Concurrence at prior milestones informs the trajectory of project implementation that leads to future milestones. It is anticipated that Project Sponsor actions, and project trajectories, will be informed and improved by the Concurrence Process.

Concurrence Points 1-4 include:

- ***Concurrence Point 1: Project Purpose and Need***
  - Review of Purpose and Need
- ***Concurrence Point 2: Identification of Alternatives to Study Further***
  - Identification of alternative(s) which satisfy the Purpose and Need (Mode, alignment, and termini)
  - This may just be one alternative
- ***Concurrence Point 3: Screening of Alternatives/Elimination of Alternatives***
  - Based on effectiveness of alternative to satisfy Purpose and Need
  - Based on environmental avoidance or minimization associated with each alternative
  - If only one alternative is selected for further study at Concurrence Point 2, Concurrence Point 3 is not needed
- ***Concurrence Point 4: Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Recommendation***
  - This is a recommendation of the City of Raleigh on LPA for which the City of Raleigh will seek concurrence from the Cooperating Agencies
  - The recommended LPA would then be considered by CAMPO's TCC and Executive Board
  - The LPA would need to be appropriately integrated with the 2045 MTP with an MTP amendment; however, the City of Raleigh can proceed with the concurrence process when the LPA adoption occurs
  - At this point in the process, the project alignment, mode, and termini must be established. Although not required, preliminary station area identification would be valuable to have. Runningway options do not yet need to be determined and should be determined by applying appropriate evaluations through the NEPA process. Station areas can be further refined through the NEPA process.

Figure 1: Sequential/Cumulative Nature of Concurrence Process

Concurrence signifies that an agency does not object to a Project Sponsor-proposed action or project implementation approach at a Concurrence Point. More particularly, it signifies that the agency does not object to the proposed action in light of impacts to resources or interests over which the agency has regulatory authority. Concurrence further signifies that the agencies will abide by their Concurrence unless there is a profound changed condition upon which the proposed action was based. Non-Concurrence signifies an objection based upon an agency's finding: (1) That the proposed action or approach to project implementation is in conflict with the laws, regulations, or policies under its jurisdiction; (2) That the proposed action or approach to project implementation has substantial negative impacts on a resource or interest over which the agency has regulatory authority; or (3) That information provided is not adequate for Concurrence.

The Concurrence Process does not establish a project-level steering committee or working group. It does not provide a platform for expression of opinions or positions. It does not authorize a project or an Implementation Element of a project. It does not authorize financing for a project. The Concurrence Process is an inter-agency verification of compliance process, involving only the agencies having regulatory responsibility as previously noted. Further, the Concurrence Process is not legally binding upon the agencies which are involved. For example, an environmental permitting agency may concur on a given matter, but that Concurrence does not bind the agency to ultimately issue a permit.

The Concurrence Process is a mechanism that streamlines and expedites the process of securing verification that proposed actions at key project milestones are consistent with the laws, policies and regulations of other agencies. Without the Concurrence Process, the Project Sponsor would be forced to coordinate with other agencies on an individual basis. It would accordingly be difficult to balance the various agencies' mandates, policies, laws, or regulations.

A major goal of the Concurrence Process is to bring order to what can easily be an unwieldy and excessively time-consuming process. Agencies having regulatory jurisdiction over an impacted resource or interest are much better positioned to provide guidance to a Project Sponsor if they have knowledge of and understand the nature of other agencies' interests in the project. Accordingly, the involved agencies may collaboratively react to proposed actions or approaches to project implementation at key project milestones so that compromise-based choices can be made (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Project Sponsor Verifying Compliance with Agencies as a Team

Agency roles (Participating versus Cooperating)

The group of agencies involved in the Concurrence Process for each applicable project is known as the Concurrence Team. The Concurrence Team is composed of a Project Sponsor, Cooperating Agencies, and Participating Agencies. The composition of agencies on each Concurrence Team will vary, depending on the project's geographic location and scope. The determination of the composition of a Concurrence Team and its progression through the Concurrence Process is facilitated and staffed by a Concurrence Administrator, in support of and in cooperation with the Project Sponsor. The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) will serve as the Concurrence Administrator for the Concurrence Process.

Each role on the Concurrence Team has a defined set of responsibilities in moving the Concurrence Process forward, and in satisfying National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance requirements:

Concurrence Team Role	Responsibilities
Project Sponsor	Role assigned through adoption of *Wake Transit Work Plan*
	Initiates project and takes responsibility for its implementation
	Identifies Cooperating Agencies and Participating Agencies with Concurrence Administrator
	Identifies necessary project Concurrence Points with Concurrence Administrator and Cooperating Agencies
	Leads project through Concurrence Points and proposes project-level actions or implementation approaches at corresponding key milestones
Cooperating Agency	Federal, state, or local agency with legal jurisdiction over aspects of project implementation or with respect to resources the project can reasonably be anticipated to impact
	Develops information and/or prepares analyses related to verification of proposed actions' compliance or noncompliance with regulations, policies, or laws under its jurisdiction
	Has capability of voting on Concurrence or Non-Concurrence in response to proposed actions at key project milestones
Participating Agency	Is invited to Concurrence Meetings and may provide input throughout the Concurrence Process
	Does not have legal jurisdiction over aspects of project implementation or with respect to resources the project can reasonably be anticipated to impact
	Does not have capability of voting on Concurrence or Non-Concurrence in response to proposed actions at key project milestones

Project Background/Explanation

The City of Raleigh proposes implementing the Wake BRT: Western BRT Corridor, approximately 11 linear miles, to connect Downtown Raleigh and Downtown Cary. The project would include at least 50 percent of new dedicated transit infrastructure improvements between the GoRaleigh Station, in Downtown Raleigh, and Downtown Cary, including transit signal priority (TSP) at signalized intersections and up to 18 weather-protected BRT stations. All BRT stations will be designed to include branding, off-board fare payment, level vehicle boarding, real-time bus arrival information, schedule and route information, and ADA accessibility.

Wake County residents passed a ballot measure to fund the Wake Transit Plan in November 2016. The Wake Transit Plan recommends 20 miles of BRT infrastructure to be implemented in four (4) corridors in Wake County, to provide frequent and reliable urban mobility. The four (4) corridors are:

- Western Boulevard Corridor (Wake BRT: Western BRT Corridor)
- Wilmington Street/South Saunders Corridor
- New Bern Corridor
- Capital Boulevard Corridor

Review of Concurrence Points 1 and 2 - *Concurrence in April 2020*

Concurrence Point 1: Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Wake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): Western BRT Corridor project is to improve transit service from Downtown Raleigh to Downtown Cary. This new transit investment would accommodate projected growth, create transit infrastructure that allows the BRT route, or approved transit service, to bypass major congestion points, and improve the attractiveness of the service to experience ridership growth. Project needs are summarized below:

- Address existing and projected future growth and travel demand
- Create infrastructure that allows the transit service to bypass major congestion points
- Facilitate ridership growth along the corridor
- Improve transit service and customer experience
- Support local planning efforts to preserve and enhance the quality of life along the corridor

Concurrence Point 2: Identification of Alternatives to Study Further

The *Wake Transit Plan* (2016) identified the corridor along Western Boulevard as a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor. It showed the corridor running along Western Boulevard between Downtown Raleigh and Downtown Cary.

The *Wake Transit Plan Major Investment Study (MIS)* (2018) refined the BRT corridor to include alignment options. There was a single alignment option identified for the corridor between Downtown Raleigh and Jones Franklin Road. There were three options identified between Jones Franklin Road and Downtown Cary. Those four options presented in the MIS include:

- Western: The Western segment would operate on Western Boulevard between Wilmington Street and Hillsborough Street. This segment was the only alignment option presented in the MIS along this part of Western Boulevard. This segment is approximately 4.8 miles in length.

- Chapel Hill: The Chapel Hill segment would operate on Chapel Hill Road between the intersection of Western Boulevard and Hillsborough Street and the intersection of Chapel Hill Road and Durham Road. This segment is approximately 4.1 miles in length.

- Chatham: The Chatham segment would operate on Chatham Street between the intersection of Chatham Street and Hillsborough Street and the intersection of Chatham Street and Cedar Street. This segment is approximately 3.1 miles in length.

- Cary Towne/Walnut: The Cary Towne/Walnut segment would operate on Cary Towne Boulevard and Walnut Street between Hillsborough Street and Kildaire Farm Road. A portion of this alignment between Buck Jones Road and Western Boulevard would operate on the Western Boulevard Extension, a roadway that is not currently constructed. This segment is approximately 3.9 miles in length.

A fourth alignment option between Jones Franklin Road and Downtown Cary was identified by both the Town of Cary and City of Raleigh during planning studies in their respective jurisdictions.

- Cary Towne/Maynard: The Cary Towne/Maynard segment would operate on Cary Towne Boulevard, Maynard Road, and E Chatham Street between Jones Franklin Road and Downtown Cary. A portion of this alignment between Buck Jones Road and Western Boulevard would operate on the Western Boulevard Extension, a roadway that is not currently constructed. This segment is approximately 4.7 miles in length.

These alignment options can be paired to make four alternatives. Those alternatives include:

- Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill
- Alternative 2: Western and Chatham
- Alternative 3: Western and Cary Towne/Walnut
- Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard

During the early stage of project development, routing into and through downtown Cary and downtown Raleigh was further identified for these alignment options. These alternatives also satisfy the Purpose and Need of the project.

Mode: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Alignment: (See Map Attached)
Termini: Downtown Raleigh (GoRaleigh Station) to Downtown Cary (Cary Multimodal Transit Facility)

All four of these alternatives provide direct access to the major origins and destinations along the corridor and serve the identified travel market. The identified mode is the most cost-effective and least intrusive mode that can achieve the proposed purpose and need for the project. The BRT mode improves throughput capacity and transit service reliability to a level adequate to serve the travel market without introducing significant impacts to the corridor.

The preferred runningway and location of stations will be identified as preliminary plans are developed.

Concurrence Point 3: Screening of Alternatives/Elimination of Alternatives

As described in Concurrence Point 2, the four alternatives to study further include:

- Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill
- Alternative 2: Western and Chatham
- Alternative 3: Western and Cary Towne/Walnut
- Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard

At the beginning of the analysis, Walnut Street was examined as part of Alternative 3: Western and Cary Towne/Walnut. Walnut Street is a 2-lane facility in an older, established neighborhood. This area has extremely limited development potential and possible right-of-way issues. Moreover, BRT routing along Academy Street did not align with the Town of Cary's vision for Downtown as recent improvements on Academy Street have created a pedestrian friendly place between the Arts Center and E. Chatham, which does not allow right-of-way for a high frequency transit service. During the course of analysis, routing the BRT corridor along Walnut Street was deemed infeasible.

Furthermore, a right-of-way (ROW) analysis was conducted to understand the potential for incorporating dedicated BRT lanes and intersection designs. The North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) company has a rail line and 200 feet of associated right-of-way through the general study area, parallel to Hillsborough Road and East Chatham Street between Jones Franklin Road and SE Maynard Road in Cary. Existing right-of-way along Hillsborough Street and East Chatham Street is between 50-80 feet. There is a general concern of constructability when any proposed work falls within the railroad ROW. Figure 1 shows that, due to the physical location of railroad, the ridership catchment area of this alternative will be limited, and the development potential will also be restricted. Because of this rail conflict, the Alternative 2: Western and Chatham was taken out of consideration because it would be unlikely that any BRT infrastructure could be constructed within the NCRR right-of-way.

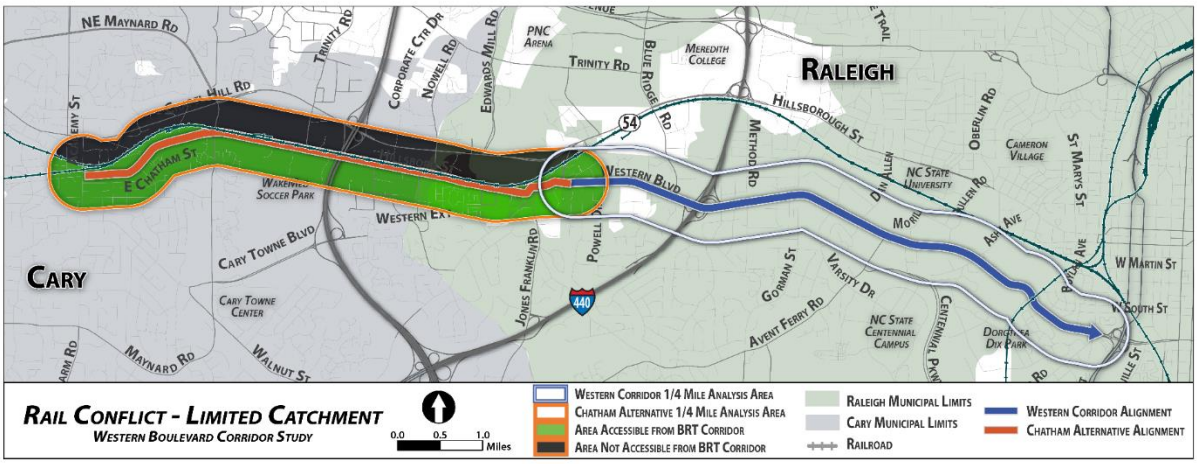

Figure 1: Chatham Alignment - Rail conflict and Limited Catchment Area

After eliminating Alternative 2: Western and Chatham and Alternative 3: Western and Cary Towne/Walnut, two alternatives remained for further evaluation:

- Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill

- Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard

The remaining two alternatives were analyzed based on a series of factors including adherence to existing plans, public input, right-of-way availability, transit propensity, travel time, future employment and population, and development potential. Each of these factors are summarized below.

- Lower Rail Conflict
    - Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill has two railroad conflicts requiring a rail crossing with crossing gates. The first conflict would be the proposed NCRR crossing on Hillsborough Street that links Western Boulevard to Chapel Hill Road. The second conflict would be an NCRR crossing entering downtown Cary from the north. While the existing railroad is currently used for freight and Amtrak service, this NCRR rail line is the proposed corridor for the future commuter rail service that could potentially have up to 40 trains a day in each direction.
    - Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard will potentially have a rail crossing conflict in downtown Cary at the CSX crossing on South Harrison Avenue. Generally, this rail line is used less frequently by Amtrak.
- Public Input
    - The Major Investment Study (MIS) conducted between 2017 and 2018 included public outreach for this corridor. This outreach was conducted online, and IP addresses of the respondents were used to identify their location. While this does not always coincide with the zip code of respondents' residences, it is likely to coincide with either a respondent's residence, place of employment, or another location within a respondent's daily activity space or travel market. Respondents from Raleigh expressed a strong preference for connecting Raleigh and Cary via Cary Towne Boulevard. The alternatives presented during that study did not include Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard. However, since this modified alignment also runs primarily on Cary Towne, similar preference can be attested to the Cary Towne/ Maynard alignment.
    - The City of Raleigh held a community open house kickoff meeting for the Wake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Western Boulevard Corridor Study on November 12, 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project, share information on current conditions, relate potential BRT alignment options, and obtain initial community feedback. Input was sought on potential trip destinations and important activity centers in the corridor. The question regarding potential destinations was asked separately for locations in Raleigh and Cary. Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard connects the largest number destinations the public indicated were important to access via BRT.
- Existing Plans
    - The extension of Western Boulevard from Saddle Seat Drive to Buck Jones Road benefits Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard since the alignment is planned to run along this section of Western Boulevard. Additionally, Edwards Mill Road is also planned to be extended over the railway line to the proposed Western Boulevard Extension. It should be noted that currently, the MTP mentions 2045 as the horizon year for these projects. For the feasibility of Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard, the 2045 MTP will require

amendment to reflect the earlier delivery of these projects. Operation of the Wake BRT: Western BRT Corridor service from Raleigh to Cary is envisioned within the ten-year program of improvements under the Wake Transit Plan (by 2027) therefore the timing of the Western roadway extension project would require acceleration.
    - The extension of Jones Franklin Road to Chapel Hill Road with a grade separation with the railroad is included in the MTP as a 2-lane facility in the horizon year of 2045. However, a proposed amendment to the Raleigh Comprehensive Plan to add this proposed extension was recently rejected by the Raleigh City Council, and the next edition of the MTP will likely be amended to reflect this deletion. The section of Chapel Hill Road from the proposed intersection with Jones Franklin Road extension to Corporate Center Drive is planned to be widened to 4 lanes, again with a horizon year of 2045. This project would require advancement to allow for implementation of the Chapel Hill BRT corridor.
- Right-of-Way Availability
    - Overall, both alternatives have adequate right-of-way for potential dedicated BRT lanes. There are a few locations along each alternative where the available right-of-way gets constricted and additional right-of-way may be required for effective implementation of dedicated BRT.
- Transit Propensity
    - Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard reaches a higher number of zero and one-car households than Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill.
    - Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard serves a higher number of persons living in poverty than Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill.
- Future Employment and Population
    - Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard serves more people and jobs than Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill in 2018 and in 2045. Future projections do not include newly proposed large-scale developments such as Fenton and Cary Towne Center. These new developments may lead to the Cary Towne/Maynard alternative serving an even higher number of people and jobs in 2045 than the official projections.
- Travel Time
    - Travel time along Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard is slightly higher than Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill. This is partly because the difference in their lengths is 0.9 miles and mostly because Cary Towne/ Maynard alternative serves more stations than Chapel Hill alternative. Even though the end to end travel time is 10% higher in Cary Towne/ Maynard alternative, this difference will be too small to perceive for the travelers to and from other stations along the corridor.
- Development Potential
    - The industrial parcels located between I-440 and I-40 are the only parcels that render themselves to potential future development along the Chapel Hill corridor. However, the current land use policy which advocates for preserving industrial land might restrict further development of these parcels. Alternatively, the Cary Towne / Maynard alternative connects Raleigh to the new planned developments at Fenton and Cary Towne Center, which include residences, workplaces and

shopping centers. In this regard, Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard ranks higher than Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill.

- NEPA Impacts
    - A NEPA screening was carried out for all the alternatives. There were a few concerns highlighted for both alternatives in the NEPA screening, however neither alternative contained a fatal flaw which would eliminate it from consideration.

For each category discussed above, both corridor alternatives were assigned a qualitative value (high, medium or low). For example, a corridor faring better than the other in any parameter receives a 'high' value, while the other receives a 'low' value. High, medium and low are represented in the Table 1 as ↑, ↔, and ↓ respectively. Finally, an overall qualitative value was assigned based on the values in each parameter. Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard performed better than Alternative 1: Western and Chapel Hill in almost all categories evaluated above. Based on this evaluation, Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard appears to be the most suitable alignment for BRT along the Wake BRT: Western Corridor and satisfies the Purpose and Need, outlined in Concurrence Point 1.

Table 1: Qualitative Evaluation of Corridor Alternatives

Category	Cary Towne / Maynard Alternative	Chapel Hill Road Alternative
Lower Rail Conflict	↑	↓
Public Preference	↑	↓
Adherence with MTP projects in the corridor	↑	↓
Right of Way availability	↔	↔
Transit Propensity	↑	↓
Population and Employment Within Catchment Area	↑	↓
Shorter Travel Time along the BRT corridor	↓	↑
Future Development Potential	↑	↓
NEPA Impacts	↔	↔
Overall	↑	↓

While all of the alignment alternatives carried forward for further study were determined to address the project purpose and need to an extent, the preceding analysis reveals that Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard has much greater potential than the other alternatives to accommodate projected growth and travel demand; improve the attractiveness of the service to experience ridership growth; and support local planning efforts to preserve and enhance the quality of life along the corridor. Alternatives 1-3 either do not have the potential or ability to address the project purpose and need to the extent of Alternative 4, or they are more challenged by constructability or land use compatibility constraints.

Concurrence Point 4: Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Recommendation

Alternative 4: Western and Cary Towne/Maynard, as described in Concurrence Point 2, is recommended to be submitted as the LPA to CAMPO. This is consistent with the Town of Cary and City of Raleigh which endorsed the LPA on July 23, 2020 and August 18, 2020, respectively. After these endorsements, the LPA will move forward to CAMPO for its consideration of adoption and inclusion in the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Next Steps

30-Day Public Comment Period on LPA and Schedule CAMPO Executive Board Public Hearing	By October 19, 2020
LPA Consideration of Recommendation to CAMPO Board by CAMPO TCC	By November 5, 2020
LPA Consideration of Adoption by CAMPO Board	By November 18, 2020
Concurrence Point 5: LEDPA	TBD
Concurrent Point 6: Agreement with Jurisdictions for Additional Concurrence Points	TBD

Concurrence Point 5: Least Environmentally Damaging Preferred Alternative (LEDPA) Recommendation

- This is the NEPA preferred alternative. At this point, stations, preferred runningway solutions, termini, mode, alignment, ROW, pavement impacts, etc. should be known.
- At this point, environmental avoidance and minimization should be discussed relative to the refined project details to select a LEDPA.
- This is the point at which we optimize the design and benefits of the project while reducing environmental impacts to both the human and natural environment.

Concurrence Point 6: Agreement with Jurisdictions for Additional Concurrence Points

- Opportunity for the project sponsor and cooperating agencies to reassess whether any remaining proposed project-level decisions will impact their jurisdictions.
- If there are impacts, an agreement will be reached on future points for concurrence.

Wake Bus Rapid Transit - Western Corridor Project - Raleigh, North Carolina