

The City of Charlotte **TRANSPORTATION** Action Plan 2008 Annual Report



CHARLOTTE



In May of 2006, the Charlotte City Council adopted the Transportation Action Plan (TAP) — the City's first comprehensive, multi-modal, long-range transportation plan. The TAP includes the City's policies, projects and programs that will be necessary over the next 25 years to accommodate projected growth and reduce existing transportation deficiencies.



When adopted, the TAP called for a 25-year investment of \$3.57 billion in 2006 dollars to build and maintain the local thoroughfares, streets, connectivity projects, traffic signal systems, pedestrian pathways and bicycle facilities. When inflated and adjusted to include all the farm-to-market road projects in the Charlotte sphere of influence, the total cost of the TAP is estimated at \$7.26 billion.

Increases in the various types of transportation capacity defined in the TAP, in conjunction with increases in freeway and expressway capacities, and expanded bus and rapid transit services, will be necessary as Charlotte—one of the nation's largest cities—continues to grow in the next 25 years.

I am pleased to present the 2008 Annual Report for the Transportation Action Plan. This report describes the achievements and the challenges that occurred in 2008, our third year of implementing the goals, strategies and projects recommended in the TAP. I believe an annual report is important not just to highlight our successes, but also to identify possible changes in strategies or investments that we should consider in the upcoming years.

Council and staff have been implementing the TAP's policies and programs since its adoption. In the years ahead, City Council will continue to make difficult decisions about transportation priorities, revenues and growth management so that Charlotte can continue to be one of the most livable and economically attractive large cities in the nation.

Curt Walton,
City Manager

January 2009

Transportation Action Plan 2008 Annual Report

The Transportation Action Plan (TAP) describes the goals, objectives and policies that are necessary to make Charlotte one of the premier cities in the nation for providing land use and transportation choices. A full copy of the Transportation Action Plan is available at <http://cdot.charmeck.org>.

To achieve the City's goals, the TAP recommends a variety of investments in transportation, presently estimated at \$7.26 billion for construction and maintenance expenditures by 2030. This level of investment—together with concurrent investments in State-maintained free-ways and expressways and in new rapid transit lines—will be necessary to accommodate the City's ongoing growth, while protecting the high quality of life in Charlotte.

Each year's Annual Report describes the progress and challenges in implementing the TAP. These annual reviews enable City Council and staff to identify obstacles that must be overcome and determine changes in the resources or actions necessary to achieve the City's transportation-related goals.

Among the highlights in 2008:

- **LYNX Blue Line** light rail service opened with an average daily ridership this year of more than 15,000, far exceeding its first-year ridership estimates.
- Charlotte voters passed a **transportation bond** measure in excess of \$160 million for roadway, signalization, connectivity, traffic calming, bicycle and sidewalk projects.
- **The Committee of 21 and the 21st Century Transportation Committee** made recommendations regarding state and local transportation funding needs and revenue sources.
- The TAP was honored by the Federal Highway Administration and by the North Carolina American Planning Association as a **model plan for its integrated transportation and land use strategies**.

The annual report is organized according to the five goals of the TAP (shown at the top of each of the following pages). For each of the goals, the 2008 Annual Report summarizes the achievements of the past year, current activities, and the issues and challenges affecting implementation of the TAP.

Achievements

- **City Council adopted the TAP** in May 2006. The TAP underscores the importance of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management strategy as a way to guide growth toward places where appropriate levels of transportation infrastructure, multimodal capacity and connectivity can be provided.
- **The Centers, Corridors and Wedges Map was adopted** as part of the TAP. This map (Figure 1 in the *TAP Policy Document*) will enable the City to monitor whether we are meeting the Centers, Corridors and Wedges land use targets. *(The map is displayed on the inside back cover of this report.)*
- In compliance with TAP Policies 1.1.2 – 1.1.4, **the City monitors** the amount of residential and non-residential development occurring in Centers, Corridors and Wedges.
- Thanksgiving marked the one-year anniversary of **LYNX Blue Line light rail service**. The average weekday ridership of 15,098 far exceeded the 9,100 estimated riders per day.

Current Activities

- **Monthly rezoning review reports** indicate whether each rezoning request is located in a Center, Corridor or Wedge.
- **Mechanisms to monitor growth have been developed** by staff to implement Policies 1.1.2-1.1.4, which relate to the TAP land use targets. The monitoring information is used by CDOT staff during monthly rezoning reviews, and is incorporated in the Transportation Focus Area Plan and in the TAP Annual Report.
- **The public review process** on the update of Centers, Corridors and Wedges is underway. Three public workshops, held in October, and a web-based survey have given citizens opportunities to provide comments. An advisory group is reviewing the comments from the workshops and web survey and are recommending changes to the document.



Development approvals are now tracked to ensure we are meeting land use targets.

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ The concept of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth framework has been discussed in Charlotte for over a decade. The TAP affirmed the value of this concept and prompted the Planning Department to begin the update of this framework which will further support **the transition of Centers, Corridors and Wedges from concept to implementation**. This transition will result in the need to revise some plans and policies to bring them into alignment with Centers, Corridors and Wedges.
- ▶ **Adopted land use targets help monitor implementation** of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management framework. Policies 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 state that the City will ensure at least 40% of

new households, 70% of new multi-family units, 75% of new office development and 75% of new employment will be located within the centers and corridors.

- ▶ In FY 07, The City **met the office and employment targets** (Table A), **but did not meet the multi-family target**.

TABLE A FY 08 Annual Measurement: Development Locating Within Centers and Corridors		
	TARGET	ACTUAL
TAP Policy 1.1.2		
Total New Households	40%	53.8%
New Multi-Family Households	70%	67.7%
TAP Policy 1.1.3		
Total New Office Development	75%	98.7%
New Employment	75%	94.8%

- ▶ **The City's integrated transportation and land use strategy encourages a greater percentage of our households be located within ¼ mile of schools, parks, shopping and transit service.** Meeting this target can reduce vehicle miles of travel by shortening many vehicle trips and by making it possible for some people to walk, ride bicycles or take transit to more destinations. However, the latest analysis (Table B) shows that the trends are in the wrong direction on three of the four categories when compared to the 2004 baseline. In order to reverse these trends, the City will need to

TABLE B Percentage of City Population Living Within 1/4 Mile of Amenities and Services				
Year	Shopping	Schools	Parks	Transit*
2004	45.6%	13.0%	16.9%	63.5%
2006	51.4%	11.8%	16.1%	61.2%
2007	52.5%	13.0%	15.7%	54.0%
2008	52.8%	12.2%	15.7%	57.0%

* Local Transit Route

more actively implement the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management framework through future area plans and rezoning reviews.

*Prioritize, design, construct and maintain **convenient and efficient transportation facilities** to improve safety and neighborhood livability, foster economic development, promote transportation choices and meet land use objectives.*

Achievements

- By adopting and now beginning to implement the TAP and Urban Street Design Guidelines, the City Council demonstrated its **commitment to creating a multi-modal transportation system** with benefits for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, employers or business owners, and neighborhood residents.
- The City adopted the **Bicycle Plan** to create a more bicycle-friendly Charlotte.
- In 2008, CDOT developed and implemented an **awareness campaign** to support the installation of new Pedestrian Beacon Systems.
- During FY 2008 CDOT **designed and/or implemented:**
 - ▶ 14.3 miles of road projects
 - ▶ 6 intersection projects
 - ▶ 62 obsolete traffic signal controllers replaced
 - ▶ 136 traffic signals in signal systems retimed
 - ▶ 21.1 miles of sidewalk projects
 - ▶ 12.3 miles of bicycle projects
- CATS received the Pre-eminent Star **award** from the Federal Transit Administration for outstanding innovation and best practices in public transit, and the Federal Highway Administration's 2008 National Award of Excellence in the design of intermodal facilities for the I-485 Station Design.



The intersection of Scott, Kenilworth, Romany and Harding was retrofitted with a left-turn lane, pedestrian-crossing islands, stamped crosswalks and countdown timers to provide a safer intersection for all travelers.



The Lynx Blue Line began operations November 26, 2007, and is the first of five planned rapid transit corridors.

Current Activities

- In order to create more “complete streets,” the City is continuing to apply the **Urban Street Design Guidelines** on all City-sponsored transportation projects.
- During the 2008-2010 bond cycles, CDOT expects to **plan, design and/or construct** the following:
 - ▶ 7.9 miles of road projects
 - ▶ 10 intersection projects
 - ▶ 75 obsolete traffic signal controllers replaced per year
 - ▶ 200 traffic signals retimed per year
 - ▶ 29 miles of sidewalk projects
 - ▶ 10 miles of bicycle projects per year
- The City’s Traffic Impact Study Guidelines are being converted to **Transportation Impact Study Guidelines** to reflect a multi-modal transportation approach.
- **A citywide Pedestrian Plan is being developed** by staff and will be presented for City Council’s consideration in 2009.
- An **I-485 parking expansion** will begin construction in early 2009 to assist with overcrowding at the I-485 LYNX Station park and ride lot.
- Four **additional Light Rail Vehicles** were ordered to counter crowding during the peak period.
- **Park and Ride expansions** are under design for the Mallard Creek and Huntersville Gateway Park & Ride lots.

Figure 2 (see back cover) provides details regarding road and intersection projects advanced since the TAP was adopted.

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ **The TAP relies heavily on the implementation of the Urban Street Design Guidelines.** The USDG will provide more connectivity, route choices and better streets for all users. Implementing the USDG through private sector development depends on changing the subdivision and zoning ordinances. City staff will be defining ordinance changes necessary to implement the USDG.



The Urban Street Design Guidelines will enable all neighborhoods to have tree-lined streets that enhance livability.

Collaborate with local and regional partners on land use, transportation and air quality to enhance environmental quality and promote long-term regional sustainability.

Achievements

- The City actively fosters regional transportation, air quality and sustainability objectives through **involvement in the Mecklenburg Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO)**. City staff not only participate actively in MUMPO planning activities, but are responsible for most technical activities.
- CATS continued to advance the **preliminary engineering phase of the LYNX Blue Line Extension** (Northeast Corridor) and the **Purple Line** (North Corridor) in cooperation with federal, state and local partners.
- An **Economic Impact Study for Streetcar** was completed in 2008 and is being reviewed by staff. The study explores the potential for economic development/redevelopment along the streetcar corridor, as well as potential funding strategies. Findings of the study, and an updated cost estimate, will be presented to the Streetcar Advisory Committee and City Council in early 2009.

Current Activities

- City, State and regional planning organizations within the Charlotte metropolitan area are completing a study to determine if any major highways should be considered for **High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV), High Occupancy Toll (HOT) or other types of managed lanes**.
- City and County staff **worked with over 110 private companies** to implement "Clean Air Works!" – a series of activities intended to reduce air pollutant emissions during ozone season.



- In 2008, City and MUMPO staff compiled lists of roadway, transit and alternate

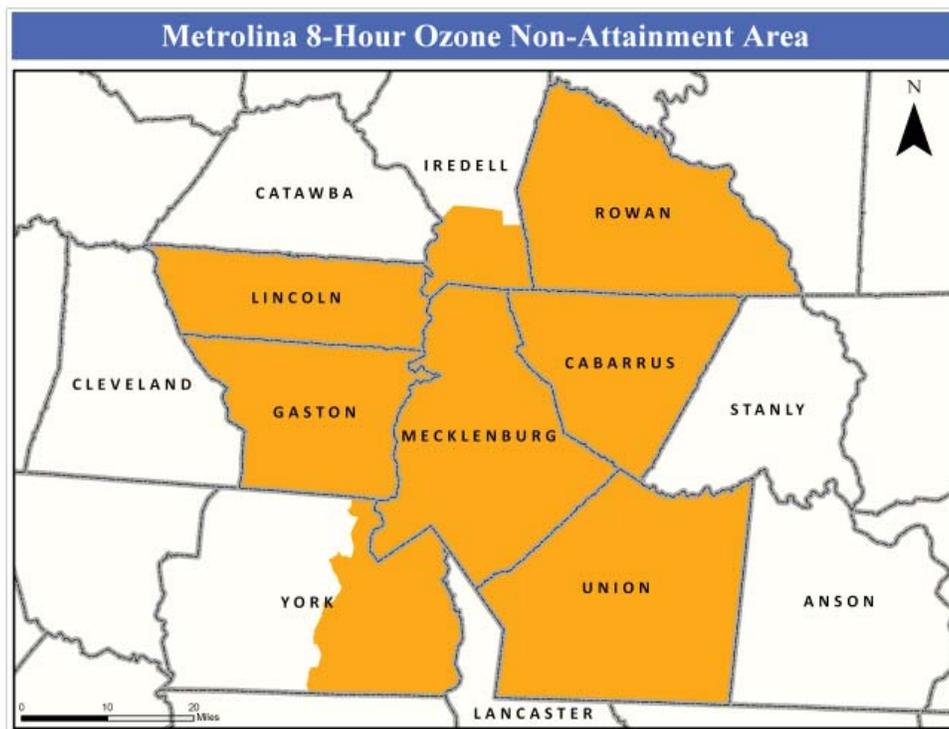


Schools in neighborhoods on a connected street system, such as Shamrock Gardens, provide more opportunities for children to walk or bike to school.

- City and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools staff continue to work on **school siting and design changes** that could be implemented to encourage walking and bicycling to school.
- Mecklenburg County hired a **Safe Routes to School Coordinator** in 2008. City staff are collaborating with the new Coordinator to create more walkable school environments.

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ While City transportation projects are constructed to meet the City transportation and land use objectives, **NCDOT project designs often do not reflect Charlotte's urban vision and multi-modal requirements.** For example, the City is working with NCDOT to modify the Mallard Creek Extension design to create a more acceptable project.
- ▶ The lack of a regional transportation planning agency for the entire **air quality non-attainment area** will continue to require ad hoc arrangements to accomplish basic regional transportation planning and air quality functions.
- ▶ CDOT worked with regional partners and federal agencies to try to help the N.C. Division of Air Quality (DAQ) develop a **strategy to meet the 8-hour ozone air quality standard by 2010.** In November, the U.S. EPA indicated that the State Implementation Plan (SIP) proposed by N.C. DAQ would not be acceptable. **The region may not be able to adopt updates to the LRTP or the TIP in 2009.**



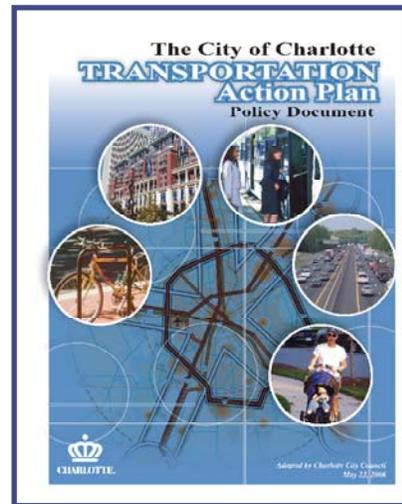
Mecklenburg County is part of an eight-county ozone non-attainment area. Air quality challenges continue to impact our region.

TAP GOAL
4

Communicate *land use and transportation objectives and services* **to key stakeholders.**

Achievements

- Through the adoption of the TAP, the City has clearly defined its **comprehensive set of transportation-related strategies.**
- The City's **transportation priorities** are clearly identified in the 5-year Capital Investment Program and 10-year Capital Needs Assessment.
- CDOT sponsors an **annual survey** through UNCC to assess the community's opinions on transportation issues and concerns.
- In an effort to better communicate the City's land use and transportation objectives, the City developed a Growth Strategy Communication Plan in 2008.
- The TAP Policy Document and Technical Document can be found **on the internet** at <http://cdot.charmeck.org>.



Current Activities

- The City is **tracking land development permits** monthly and annually to monitor the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management targets. This information is available to elected officials, staff and citizens to determine how well we are fulfilling our growth management vision and meeting specific land use targets.
- The City is re-launching the **www.charlottefuture.com** website to convey information to citizens regarding the City's growth and transportation strategies.
- The City will produce a video, similar to the focus area videos, that provides a **comprehensive overview of the City's Growth Strategy**, including an explanation of Charlotte's integrated land use and transportation linkage.
- Working with a stakeholder group, the City is currently **updating its Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth strategy.**



Issues and Challenges

- ▶ Integrating land use and transportation choices over time requires a **long-term vision and continued communication** with residents and stakeholders, and monthly or quarterly reports to the City Council and Planning Commission.
- ▶ Communicating this vision clearly and concisely can be difficult and may require the City to develop **new tools** (such as a video and other visuals) that enable our citizens to better understand our transportation challenges.



Continued growth in the Charlotte region will see increasing travel on the City's roadways. Continued implementation and funding of the TAP will help Charlotte address the City's transportation challenges.

TAP GOAL
5

Seek financial resources, external grants and funding partnerships necessary to implement transportation programs and services.

Achievements

- When City Council adopted the TAP in 2006, they acknowledged that the TAP recommended spending \$3.57 billion (\$7.26 billion when adjusted for inflation) to build, operate and maintain **locally-funded transportation infrastructure** through 2030.
- To begin implementing the TAP, City Council voted in 2006 to **provide more financial capacity** for bond measures (including transportation) in 2006, 2008 and 2010, as well as an annual \$4.3 million increase for street resurfacing.

The City Boulevard Extension project brings much needed capacity to Northeast Charlotte.



- In November of 2006 and 2008, Charlotte residents passed **bond measures** that included a total of almost \$240 million for roadway, signalization, connectivity and bicycle and sidewalk projects.
- NCDOT awarded CATS additional CMAQ funds to purchase expansion and replacement buses and increased the State funding share in the LYNX Blue Line project to purchase additional light rail vehicles.

Current Activities

- In 2008, the **Committee of 21** was appointed by the Charlotte Chamber, City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, and tasked with identifying long-term funding options for building and maintaining road projects throughout Mecklenburg County.
- After convening in May, the Committee of 21 reviewed a wide array of transportation funding and governance options, and is expected to make **recommendations** to the City and County in the Spring of 2009.
- The Committee of 21 is expected to recommend an **additional vehicle registration fee** to be used for roadway maintenance and an **additional half-cent sales tax** to be used for construction of state and local roadways in Mecklenburg County. The Committee also made recommendations regarding tolls and a future Vehicle Miles of Travel fee.
- The City and County are expected to **consider pursuing the Committee of 21's recommendations** through upcoming legislative sessions.

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ **Federal and state gas tax collections continue to diminish as a viable transportation funding source** due to more fuel-efficient vehicles and, in 2008, decreases in vehicle miles of travel. In addition, reduced gas tax revenues decreases Powell Bill funding for street maintenance. New funding sources, such as those proposed by the 21st Century Transportation Committee and the Committee of 21, will need to be considered.
 - ▶ **Without a dedicated transportation funding source, at levels consistent with the TAP**, Charlotte will struggle to keep pace with continued growth in population, employment and travel.
 - ▶ **NCDOT continues to experience funding shortfalls, causing numerous state road projects to be delayed further.** NCDOT's inability to advance these projects is impacting Charlotte's ability to accommodate its growth.
 - ▶ **If the half-cent sales tax for non-transit transportation projects is advanced as recommended** by the Committee of 21, the City and Towns will need to ensure that projects funded by the sales tax are implemented in a timely and cost-efficient manner.
- ▶ **Half-cent sales tax revenues are down significantly** as the local and national recession forces the public to reduce spending. If this trend continues, transit service reductions, and a potential delay in the completion of the 2030 Corridor System Plan, may be necessary.



Charlotte does not have adequate funding for roads to keep pace with growth.

Conclusion

The TAP Annual Report provides an opportunity each year for residents, elected officials and staff to reflect on our transportation achievements, discuss our transportation challenges and identify refined or new ways to meet our transportation goals.

Charlotte's City Council took a crucial first step in addressing the City's transportation challenges in 2006 by adopting the 25-year Transportation Action Plan. The TAP calls for a series of policies, projects and programs that are necessary to accommodate ongoing growth, while protecting our quality of life.

This report summarizes the achievements, current activities and challenges the City is now facing as it continues to implement the TAP. There have been many achievements since 2006 and a large variety of work is programmed for the year ahead, but there are also significant challenges to meeting our transportation goals.

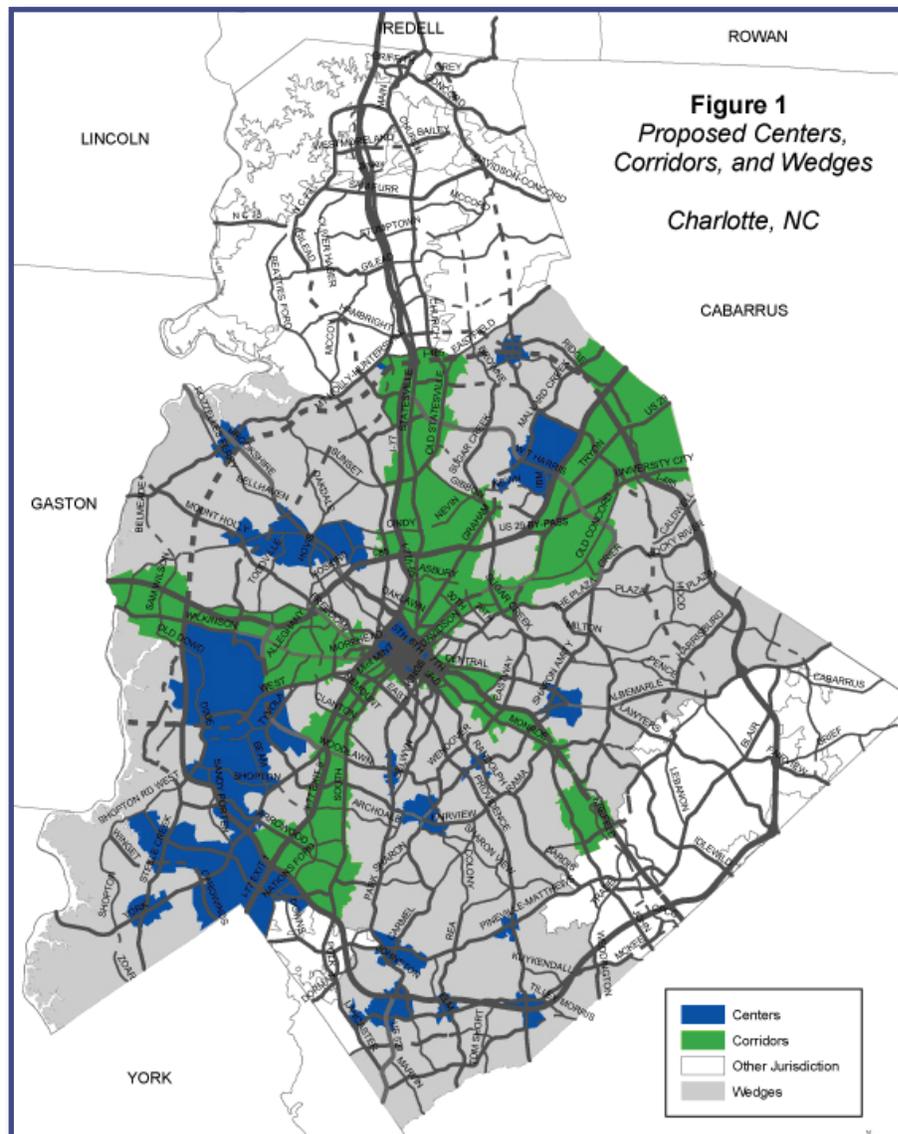
Charlotte's TAP and the City's commitment to quality transportation design and integrating land use and transportation choices received national and statewide recognition this year through the following awards:

- Federal Highway Administration "Transportation Planning Excellence Award" for the TAP;
- North Carolina American Planning Association "Marvin Collins Award" for the TAP, USDG and the Dilworth Area Plan;
- Federal Transit Administration "Pre-eminent Star Award" for best practices in public transit; and
- Federal Highway Administration "Award of Excellence" for I-485 Station Design.

These awards recognize Charlotte as a national and statewide leader in defining and achieving a comprehensive transportation and land use vision.

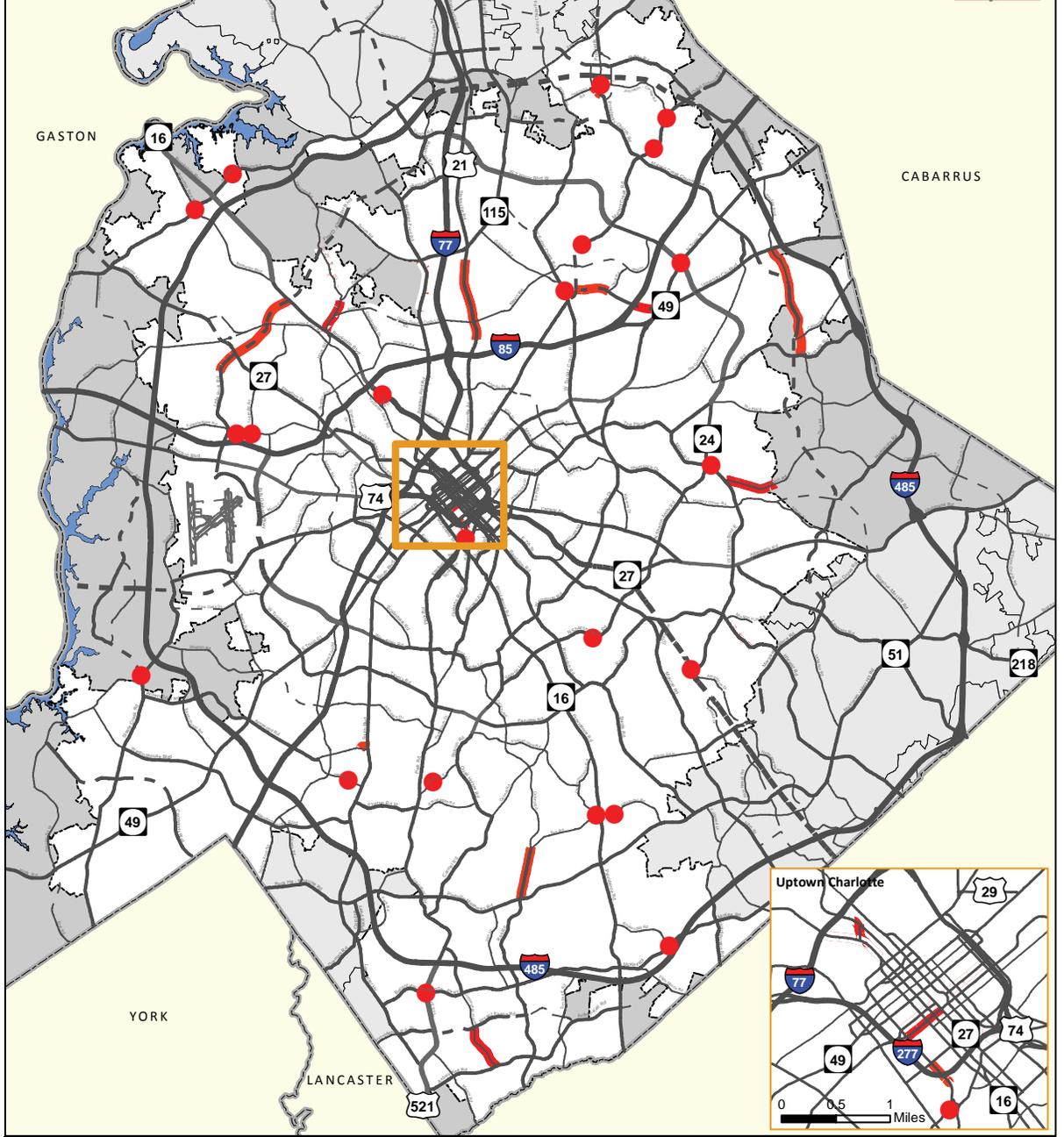
Looking ahead to 2009, there are three key challenges facing the City Council:

- 1.** The first will be to select permanent and reliable funding sources for transportation.
 - 2.** The second, ongoing challenge will be to ensure that Charlotte grows in a manner consistent with the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management framework.
 - 3.** A third challenge continues to be the need to update city codes and ordinances to successfully implement the TAP and the Urban Street Design Guidelines.
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The Centers, Corridors and Wedges Map (adopted as part of the *Transportation Action Plan*) helps provide the framework for land use and transportation investment decisions in Charlotte.

Figure 2 - Transportation Projects Programmed or Implemented By the City Since TAP Adoption



<p>Programmed or Implemented Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intersection — Roadway 	<p>0 1 2 Miles</p>	<p>Charlotte Department of Transportation Planning & Design - GIS February 18, 2009</p>
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