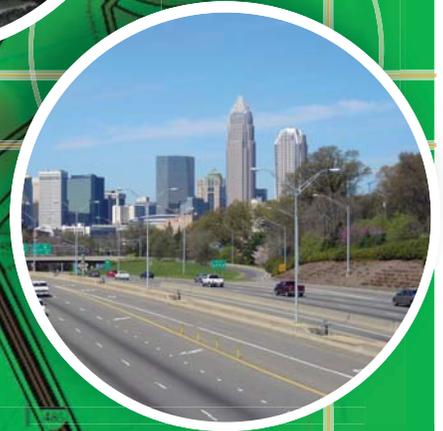


# The City of Charlotte

# TRANSPORTATION

# Action Plan

# 2009 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 describes 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 a network of local thoroughfares, streets, connectivity projects, traffic signal systems, pedestrian pathways and bicycle facilities. When costs were inflated about a year ago and adjusted to include all the farm-to-market road projects in the Charlotte sphere of influence, the total 25-year cost of the TAP was estimated to be \$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 during the next 25 years.

I am pleased to present the 2009 Annual Report for the Transportation Action Plan. This report describes the achievements and the challenges that occurred in 2009, our fourth 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 2010*

## Transportation Action Plan 2009 Annual Report

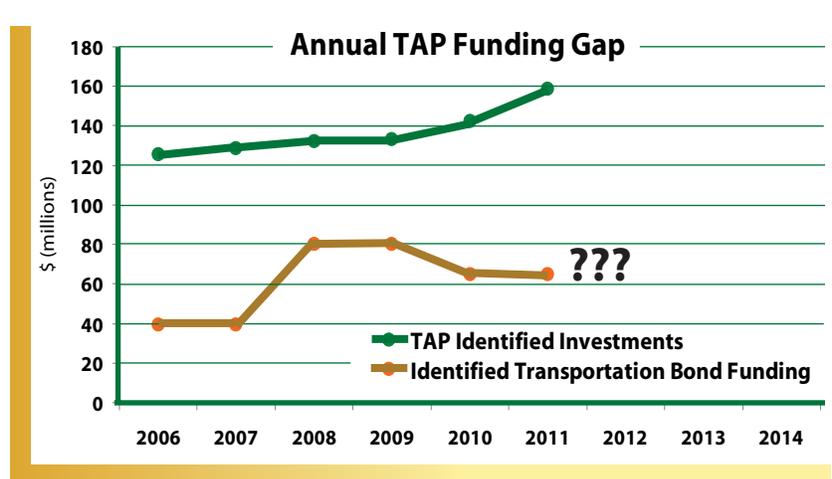
The Transportation Action Plan (TAP) describes the goals, objectives and policies that are necessary to make Charlotte one of the premier cities in the nation for providing land use and transportation choices. A full copy of the Transportation Action Plan is available at <http://cdot.charmeck.org>.

To achieve the City's goals, the TAP recommends a variety of investments in transportation, estimated in 2008 to require the expenditure of \$7.26 billion for construction and maintenance during the next 25 years. This level of investment—together with concurrent investments in State-maintained freeways and expressways and 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 2009:

- **The City continued to implement transportation projects in excess of \$160 million** for roadway, signalization, connectivity, traffic calming, bicycle and sidewalk facilities funded by the 2006 and 2008 Transportation Bond measures.
- **The Committee of 21 made recommendations** to City Council regarding state and local transportation funding and new revenue sources. While Charlotte has increased transportation funding since the TAP was adopted, a funding gap remains and funding beyond the 2010 Bond is uncertain.



- **Implementation of the Urban Street Design Guidelines (USDG)** continued in Capital Improvement Plan projects, area plans, and conditional rezonings.
- **The NC Board of Transportation adopted a Complete Streets policy**, in effect committing NCDOT to developing expectations for the design of streets similar to those described in the USDG.

## Continue implementation of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges Strategy.

### 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. *(That map is 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.
- City Council adopted **South Corridor Station Area Plans** for:
  - Arrowood Station Area
  - Sharon Road West Station Area
  - I-485 Station Area
- The **LYNX Blue Line** light rail has been in operation for two years, since November 2007. Ridership continues to exceed pre-service forecasts, with weekday ridership averaging almost 15,000 boardings.

### Current Activities



*Development approvals are now tracked to ensure the City meets land use targets.*

- **Monthly rezoning review reports** indicate whether each rezoning request is located in a Center, Corridor or Wedge.
- The City's Traffic Impact Study Guidelines are being converted to **Transportation Impact Study Guidelines** to reflect multi-modal transportation factors and support the Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework.
- **Plans are underway for these areas:**
  - Independence Boulevard
  - Center City 2020
  - Catawba
  - Elizabeth
  - Steele Creek
  - University Research Park

## Issues and Challenges

► The Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth framework has been discussed in Charlotte for over a decade. The TAP affirmed the value of this framework and prompted the Planning Department to begin **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 the refined Centers, Corridors and Wedges framework.

► **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 08, The City **met the office, employment and multi-family targets** (Table A below).

| TABLE A<br>Percentage of Development Locating Within Centers and Corridors |        |         |
|--|--------|---------|
|  | TARGET | FY 2008 |
| <b>TAP Policy 1.1.2</b>  |        |         |
| Total New Households   | 40%    | 55.8%   |
| New Multi-Family Households  | 70%    | 71.9%   |
| <b>TAP Policy 1.1.3</b>  |        |         |
| Total New Office Development   | 75%    | 97.6%   |
| New Employment   | 75%    | 91.4%   |

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

| TABLE B<br>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%    |
| 2009  | 52.7%    | 13.0%   | 15.7% | 56.2%    |

\* Local Transit Route

Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework through future 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

■ During FY 2009 CDOT **designed and/or implemented:**

- ▶ 9.7 miles of street projects
- ▶ 5 intersection projects
- ▶ 17.8 miles of sidewalk projects
- ▶ 18 miles of bicycle projects
- ▶ replacement of 78 obsolete traffic signal controllers
- ▶ re-timing of 254 traffic signals

■ By adopting and proceeding 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 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency selected Charlotte's **Urban Street Design Guidelines** for a **National Award for Smart Growth Achievement**.

■ **CATS began operation of the Sprinter Airport service.** The Sprinter is an "Enhanced/Premium" bus route that provides increased service and amenities in distinctly-branded buses and stops.



*The intersection of Rozzelles Ferry and West Trade Street was retrofitted to improve safety for all travelers by removing a high-speed turn lane, providing dedicated turn lanes in all directions, and installing sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaped median islands, and bike lanes*



*The Sprinter line provides enhanced bus service between Center City and Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.*

## 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 and through conditional rezonings.
- During the 2008-2010 bond cycles, CDOT expects to **plan, design and/or construct** the following:
  - ▶ 12 miles of street projects
  - ▶ 11 intersection projects
  - ▶ 39.8 miles of sidewalk projects
  - ▶ 10 miles of bicycle projects per year
  - ▶ replace 75 obsolete traffic signal controllers per year
  - ▶ re-time 200 traffic signals per year
- **A citywide Pedestrian Plan is being developed** and will be presented for City Council’s consideration in 2010.
- The City and County have implemented **over 100 miles of bicycle lanes, trails and signed routes in Charlotte.**
- **Four more light rail vehicles** are scheduled for delivery in early 2010.
- **A new 87-space parking lot adjacent to the I-485 LYNX Station** opened in April, 2009 to help alleviate overcrowding in the existing 1,120-space deck at the station. CATS also purchased land adjacent to the new lot for future expansion.
- The **Huntersville Gateway Park and Ride Lot’s expansion** is scheduled to be completed by Spring, 2010.
- Other increases in commuter parking supply is under consideration at **Mallard Creek Road** (expansion of the current lot) and the **Albemarle Road/Lawyers Road intersection** (construction of a new lot).

*Figure 2 (back cover) shows the 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 provide more route choices, connectivity and better streets for all users. Implementing the USDG through most private sector development depends on changing the subdivision and zoning ordinances. City staff are working on ordinance changes to be reviewed by the public and City Council in 2010.



*New Calvine Street, a local street built in accordance with USDG, was made possible through the adjacent redevelopment.*

**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 **participation in and technical support for the Mecklenburg Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO)**. In 2009, City staff worked with MUMPO staff to develop the *2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan*.
- City, State and regional planning organizations identified a network of freeways recommended for **High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV), High Occupancy Toll (HOT) or other types of managed lanes**.
- Funding to advance the design and preliminary engineering of the **Streetcar project** was approved by City Council in September, 2009. The Streetcar project, as currently defined, would extend from Rosa Parks Transit Center on Beatties Ford Road through Center City and along Central Avenue to the Eastland Mall Transit Center.
- CATS staff working on the **LYNX Blue Line Extension** submitted an updated Federal New Starts Report that gained an improved “medium” rating for cost effectiveness.

**Current Activities**

- Staff from NCDOT and CDOT are analyzing **managed lane opportunities** on:
  - I-77 North (Uptown to Lake Norman)
  - I-77 South (Uptown to SC State Line)
  - US 74 East (Uptown to I-485).

Cost, design, revenue and usage forecasts are underway for potential implementation options.
- **CDOT and CATS are partnering with businesses** in the SouthPark and University areas to define enhancements for transit riders, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- CDOT worked with NCDOT to modify the design for the **Mallard Creek Road Extension** to better meet Charlotte’s design expectations.
- NCDOT awarded a **Safe Routes to School** infrastructure grant of \$235,000 to CDOT to install pedestrian travel enhancements near Sedgefield Elementary School.

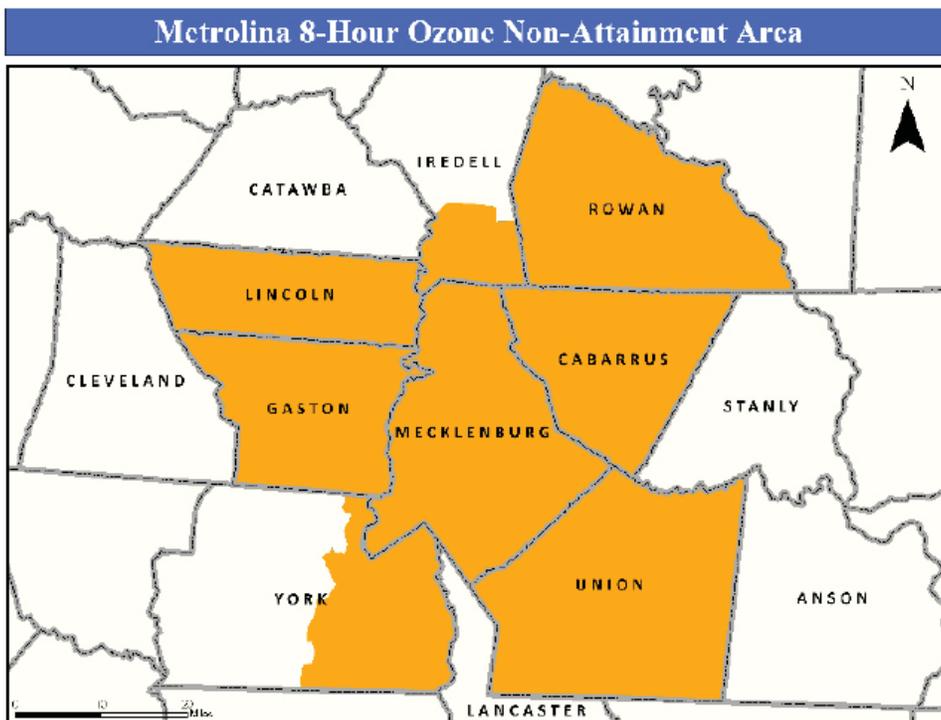


*The Safe Route to Schools program will provide more opportunities for children to walk or bike to school.*

- The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the **LYNX Blue Line Extension (Northeast Corridor)** is scheduled to be finished by July, 2010.
- Preliminary engineering and design elements—such as track, crossings and bridges—has advanced to nearly 90% for the **Red Line (North Corridor)**.

### Issues and Challenges

- ▶ While the City’s transportation projects are designed to meet the City’s transportation and land use objectives, NCDOT’s project designs have often not reflected Charlotte’s urban vision and multi-modal requirements. However, in 2009, the **North Carolina Board of Transportation passed a Complete Streets policy** and NCDOT started the process to change their designs for projects in urban areas.
- ▶ For the first time in over twenty years of measurements, ozone monitors in the Metrolina non-attainment area recorded **zero exceedances** of the 8-hour ozone standard during all of 2009.



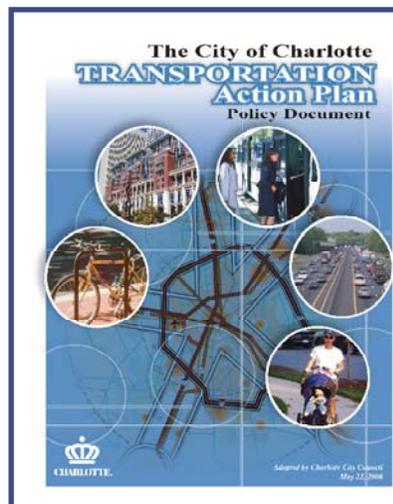
*Mecklenburg County is part of an eight-county ozone non-attainment area. Despite a much “cleaner” ozone season in 2009, air quality continues to be a very important issue in our region.*

TAP GOAL  
**4**

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

**Achievements**

- Through the adoption of the TAP in 2006, the City clearly defined its **comprehensive set of transportation-related strategies.**
- The City's **transportation priorities** are updated annually in the 5-year Capital Investment Program and 10-year Capital Needs Assessment.
- CDOT sponsors an **annual survey** 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. That information is available to elected officials, staff and citizens to determine how well the City is fulfilling the growth management vision by meeting specific land use targets.
- The stakeholder review process for the **Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework** is nearing completion. Adoption is anticipated in early 2010.
- 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 will present a **comprehensive overview of the City's Growth Strategy**, including an explanation of Charlotte's integrated land use and transportation strategies.



## Issues and Challenges

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



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

**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 projects** through 2030.
- CATS received over \$23 million from USDOT under the **American Recovery and Rein-**



*The Shopton Road West re-alignment will address congestion and improve safety in the Steele Creek area.*

- vestment Act of 2009** for renovation and expansion of the North Davidson Street Bus Garage and the acquisition of additional hybrid buses.
- City Council **increased funding for street maintenance by \$4.3 million in 2006 to shorten the resurfacing cycle** to allow CDOT to pave and rehabilitate additional roads. Initially, asphalt price increases limited the benefit, but now, in the FY09-10 paving season, prices have been at their lowest levels in three years, and this has resulted in resurfacing more miles. Applying the additional funding provided by City Council and the Powell Fund balance, CDOT is limiting the pavement condition's decline and reducing the overall paving schedule to the desired 12-14 year resurfacing cycle.
- In November of 2006 and 2008, Charlotte residents passed **bond measures** that included a total of almost \$240 million for roadway, signalization, connectivity, bicycle and sidewalk projects.

**Current Activities**

- In 2008, the **Committee of 21** was appointed by Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte and Charlotte Chamber, and tasked with identifying long-term funding options for building and maintaining road projects in Mecklenburg County.
- After convening in May, 2008, the Committee of 21 reviewed a wide array of transportation funding and governance options (see chart on next page), and made **recommendations** to the City and County in the Spring of 2009.

■ The Committee of 21 recommended 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 recommended charging **tolls on freeways** and applying a **Vehicle Miles of Travel fee**.

| Transportation Revenue Sources Recommended by The Committee of 21 |                 |                               |                              |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Funding Source  | Annual Revenues | Requires Legislative Approval | Used For                     |
| Vehicle Registration Fee  | \$18 Million    | State                         | Maintenance                  |
| Half-Cent Sales Tax*  | \$81 Million    | State                         | Construction                 |
| Toll Interstates  | TBD             | State and Federal             | Construction and Maintenance |
| Vehicle Miles of Travel Fee                                       | TBD             | State and Federal             | Construction and Maintenance |
| Other Revenue Sources Considered by The Committee of 21           |                 |                               |                              |
| Payroll Tax   | \$150 Million   | State                         | Construction and Maintenance |
| 5% Gas Tax  | \$94 Million    | State                         | Construction and Maintenance |
| Road Impact Fees  | \$84 Million    | State                         | Construction                 |
| Land Transfer Fee   | \$51 Million    | State                         | Construction and Maintenance |

\* In response to budget shortfalls, the State increased the sales tax by 1% in September, 2009, with an expiration date of July, 2011. Additional sales tax increases for transportation are unlikely until after this expiration.

Source: derived from <http://www.charmeck.org/Committeeof21/home.html>

## 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 decreases in vehicle miles of travel.
- ▶ **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 most state road projects to be delayed further.** NCDOT's

inability to advance projects not in the limelight is impacting Charlotte's ability to accommodate its growth.

- ▶ **MUMPO's 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan is severely underfunded**, resulting in a very limited list of projects to be built in the next 25 years.
- ▶ **The ability of CATS to implement the 2030 Corridor System Plan is being impacted in the short and long term by the reduction in sales tax revenues** due to the local and national recession.

## Conclusion

---

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

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

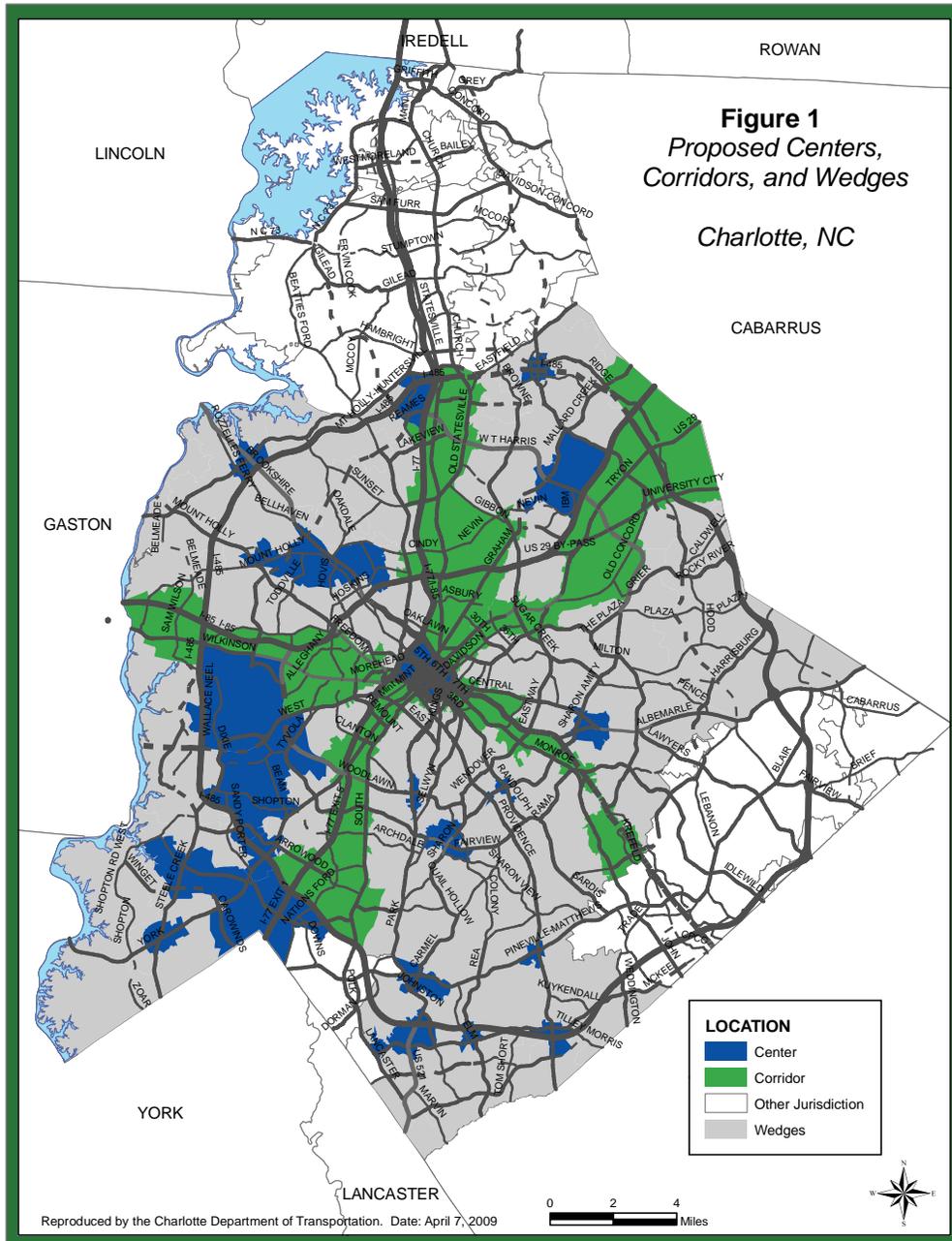
This report summarizes the achievements, current activities and challenges the City is now facing as Council and staff continue to implement the TAP. There have been many achievements since 2006 and a large variety of work is programmed for the year ahead, but there are also significant challenges to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

Charlotte's TAP and the City's commitment to quality transportation designs and to integrate land use and transportation strategies received national and statewide recognition this year through the following awards:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "National Award for Smart Growth Achievement" for the Urban Street Design Guidelines;
- North Carolina American Planning Association "Marvin Collins Award" for the South Corridor Station Area Plans;
- Conference of Minority Transportation Officials "Inter-Modal Innovation Award" for initiatives linking transportation services and quality of life; and
- NC Public Transportation Association "Safest Transit System in North Carolina."

### **Looking ahead to 2010, there are three key challenges facing the City Council:**

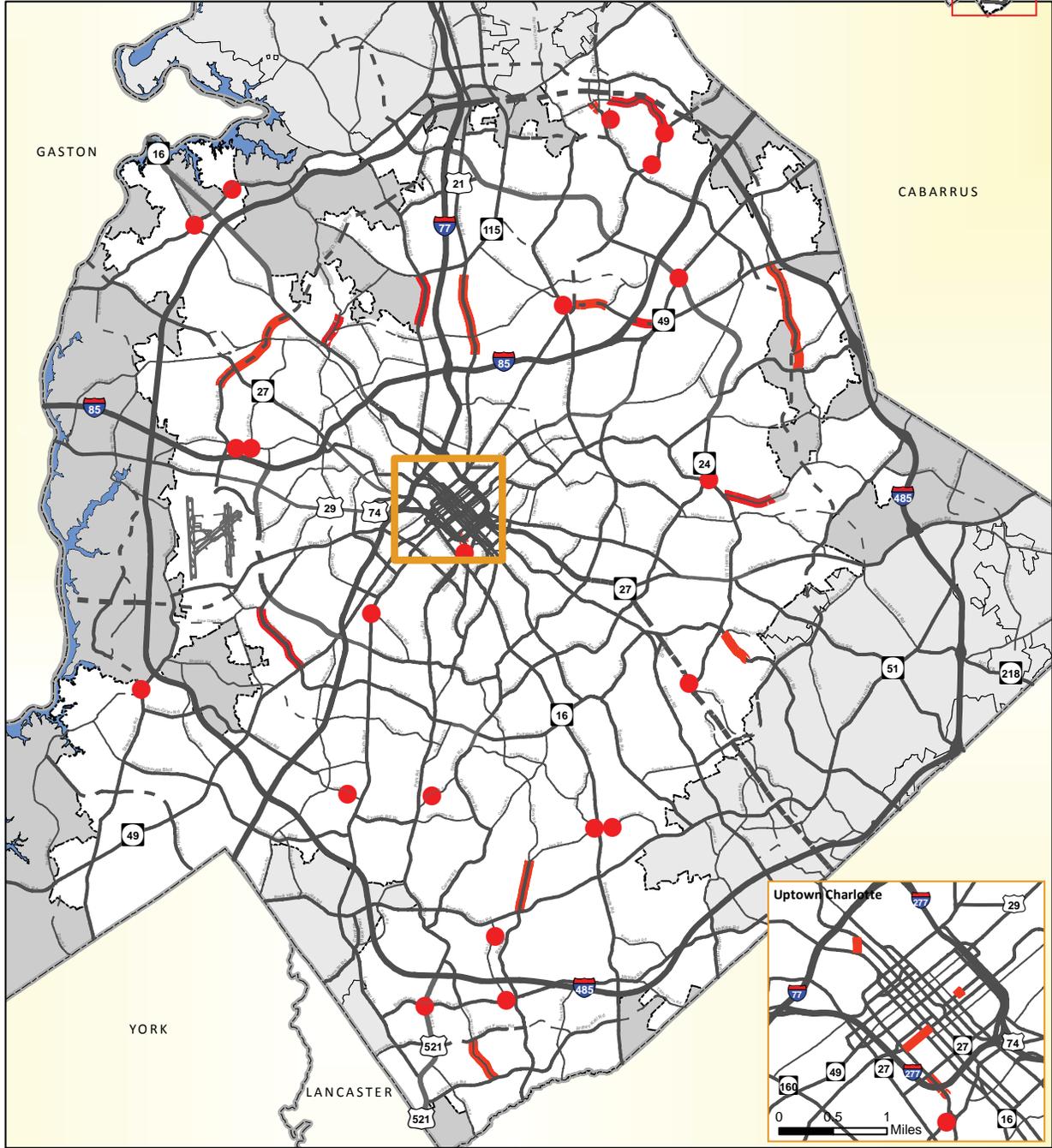
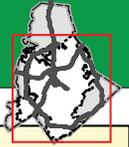
1. The first, ongoing challenge will be to ensure that Charlotte grows in a manner consistent with the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management framework.
  2. The second challenge continues to be the need to update city codes and ordinances to successfully implement the TAP and the Urban Street Design Guidelines.
  3. Third, and more long-term, will be to select permanent and reliable funding sources for transportation.
-



**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



### Programmed or Implemented Projects

- Intersection
- Roadway

0 1 2  
Miles

Charlotte Department of Transportation  
Planning & Design - GIS  
January 8, 2010



**Charlotte Department of Transportation**  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center  
600 East Fourth Street  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202

<http://cdot.charmeck.org>