

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Charlotte Corridors Major Investment Studies (MISs) represent the culmination of over a decade of land use and transportation planning by local officials and citizens.

In 1994, the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County approved the *Centers and Corridors* vision, a comprehensive guide for future land use and development in the region. As part of this plan, future development and redevelopment in the region would be focused along five major transportation corridors that were strong candidates for transit service and transit-oriented development. These recommendations were reaffirmed by the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization and included in its *2015 Transportation Plan* for the region.

In support of the *Centers and Corridors* vision, the *2025 Integrated Transit/Land-Use Plan* was completed in 1998. A key element of this plan was the development of a regional rapid transit system that would improve mobility, encourage balanced growth, and support the proposed land use initiatives in each of the region's five growth corridors. A wide range of alternative transit options and land use scenarios were evaluated for each of the five major corridors: South, North, Northeast (University), Southeast (Independent), and West (Airport). In November 1998, Mecklenburg County citizens approved a local sales and use tax (one-half percent) to support implementation of the *2025 Integrated Transit/Land-Use Plan*. In February 1999, Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte, and the Towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill, and Pineville entered into an Interlocal Agreement to plan, finance, and implement a regional transit system, now known as Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS).

During 1999, the City of Charlotte conducted a MIS of potential transit options in the South Corridor. Detailed analyses of ridership, costs, transportation issues, major environmental impacts, and land use issues were completed for the South Corridor transit alternatives identified in the *2025 Integrated Transit/Land-Use Plan*. The results of the MIS analysis reaffirmed the *2025 Plan's* findings. In February 2000, the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) adopted light rail transit operating within the railroad alignment as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for a new fixed-guideway transit system serving the South Corridor.

In 2000, CATS began MISs in the other four corridors included in the *2025 Plan*. The primary purpose of the MISs is to provide the necessary land use and transportation technical analysis, stakeholder and public outreach, and framing of issues and trade-offs to support MTC selection of a LPA for each corridor. Each corridor MIS also is designed to fulfill the Federal requirements for a MIS under the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Metropolitan Planning Regulations, particularly for a potential Federal capital funding of any project that may emerge from a MIS. While a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would not be completed until preliminary engineering of the LPA is undertaken in each corridor, each MIS would initiate the NEPA scoping

process, including publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*. Environmental analysis, conducted as an integral part of the MIS, should support eventual fulfillment of NEPA requirements for a Federally-funded project, or one requiring a Federal action, that could emerge from a MIS.

This document is one in a series prepared as part of the Charlotte Corridors Major Investment Studies Program. The information and/or findings contained in this document may be updated, refined or superceded as the studies progress.

1.2 PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Scoping Summary Report is to document the activities of the scoping phase of the Northeast Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS). The scoping process was conducted during September - October 2000 and included an intensive public involvement effort providing numerous opportunities for the public to learn about the project and provide input into the decision-making process. During the scoping phase of the study, the project's purpose and need are established, the project goals are defined, a range of alternatives is considered, and potential impacts of those alternatives are identified.

This Scoping Summary Report provides information on the project description and background, the alternatives being considered, the project participants and schedule. In addition, it also documents the public involvement activities of the scoping phase including public meetings and outreach efforts, public agency coordination and review, and comments solicited. The key technical issues associated with the project, which will become the focus of the MIS, are also identified and presented to the public as part of the on-going community involvement program.

1.3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project consists of a major public transit investment in the Northeast Corridor of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region. Past transportation studies conducted for the region have indicated the need for increased public transit services in addition to roadway facilities. In response to this need, the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) in conjunction with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is conducting a Major Investment Study (MIS) to evaluate alternative transit options for the Northeast Corridor.

The Northeast Corridor extends northeast from Center City Charlotte to the Cabarrus County line near Concord Mills, a distance of approximately 14 miles as shown in Figure 1. The Northeast Corridor study area, like the other four corridors, includes all of Center City Charlotte inside the freeway loop. The boundaries of the corridor outside Center City are generally regarded as follows: beginning at the Brookshire Freeway and North Graham Street, the northwestern boundary follows North Graham Street, continues north along Sugar Creek Road, northeast along Mallard Creek Road and Odell School Road to the Cabarrus County Line. The north boundary follows the county line to the Norfolk Southern (NS) main line (North Carolina Railroad). The NS rail line is the southeastern boundary of the corridor, extending back to Center City Charlotte. I-85 to the north and NC 49 to the east are generally considered the highway boundaries of the corridor, although development to the north of I-85 is included in the corridor definition. Major transportation facilities in the

corridor include I-85, US 29, and NC 49 highways, and the Norfolk Southern mail line railroad.

The Northeast Corridor study area encompasses a diverse range of land use types within the corridor from the center city of Charlotte to the Mecklenburg – Cabarrus County line, paralleling Interstate 85 and US 29 corridors. The southern portion of the corridor is predominantly a mix of office, light industrial and warehousing/distribution activities with some multifamily residential newly introduced to the urban core of the city. The mid-section of the corridor has been developed primarily as the industrial, warehousing/distribution sector of the city with large rail yards and trucking operations located along the major arterials. The remaining strip commercial areas are bordered by medium density residential areas of older single-family and multi-family housing. The northernmost portion has experienced significant suburban-style residential and commercial growth in the areas of University Place and Hospital, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte campus, and the University Research Park. In addition to the residential and commercial growth in the area, other major developments include the Concord Mills shopping and entertainment complex, Lowe's Motor Speedway, and Blockbuster Pavilion. Significant population and employment growth is expected to continue for many years in the future.

As stated in the *2025 Integrated Transit/Land-Use Plan for Charlotte-Mecklenburg* (October 1998), future growth projections for the region estimate a population increase of 57 percent and a 47 percent increase in employment by the year 2025. The Northeast Corridor continues to experience substantial employment growth. Major employers in the University Research Park and adjacent developments include IBM, First Union, and TIAA-CREF. Concord Mills is a major retail employer, and other developments planned along the corridor will further increase highway congestion.

The major interstate in the Northeast Corridor study area is Interstate 85 which has segments within the study area of an average daily traffic volume (ADT) of 102,000 vehicles per day. This facility experiences severe congestion and delays particularly during the peak travel times and is considered one of the major transportation problems facing the northeast part of the Charlotte region and Cabarrus County. Currently, I-85 is rated as having very poor mobility (level of service F in many sections during peak periods). Future traffic volumes are projected to increase by nearly 200 percent by the year 2020. The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has programmed the section of I-85 between the US-29/49 and Speedway Boulevard to be widened to an eight-lane facility, scheduled to begin construction in 2004. However, even with these roadway improvements, a substantial portion of this corridor will still experience peak period congestion.

1.4 PROJECT INITIAL ALTERNATIVES

The Northeast Corridor alternatives proposed for evaluation during the scoping phase include:

1. No-Build, which involves no change to transportation service or facilities in the corridor beyond already committed projects;
2. A Transportation System Management alternative, which consists of low to medium cost improvements to the operations of the local bus service, the Charlotte Area

Transit System, in addition to the currently planned transit improvements in the corridor; and

3. Multiple “Build” alternatives including bus rapid transit (BRT) facilities along the I-85 corridor and other major roadways in this vicinity, and various modes of rail service including commuter rail and light rail transit (LRT) generally following the existing Norfolk Southern railroad right-of-way and/or major arterials within the study corridor. The “Build” alternatives may include alternative land use scenarios to evaluate the potential for focusing development around transit stations.

Alternative transit modes initially considered for the Northeast Corridor include:

- Commuter Rail
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Light Rail Transit

The following is a brief description of each of these transit technologies.

1.4.1 Commuter Rail

Commuter rail is typically characterized as express rail transit operating on conventional railroad tracks. Commuter rail can be either conventional trains, or advanced diesel multiple units (DMUs) in which passenger cars are individually powered by diesel motors. Commuter rail lines are typically 30+ miles in length with greater station spacing (two to five miles apart). Trips tend to be longer, and are mostly work-trips, i.e., A. M. and P. M. peaks. Typically, top speeds for commuter rail can be 45-70 mph.

Conventional commuter trains typically consist of a diesel or electric locomotive pulling or pushing a train of passenger coaches. The coach furthest from the locomotive is equipped with a control cab from which the train can be operated, thereby eliminating the need to turn the train around to reverse its direction of travel. Several varieties of coaches are in current use, characterized by different seating levels: single, as used (for example) in Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, most of the New Jersey Transit, New York MTA Metro North, and Long Island Railroad fleets; double-deck or “gallery” cars, used (e. g.) in Chicago and the San Francisco Bay area Caltrain service; and tri-level (upper, lower, and intermediate levels) as used in South Florida’s Tri-Rail service and in Ontario’s GO Transit. This type of equipment is fully compliant with US Federal Railroad Administration requirements.

DMU equipment typically falls within three vehicle types:

Type I Equipment: Self-propelled vehicles that are fully compliant with US Federal Railroad Administration requirements and are designed primarily for a railroad-operating environment (Budd RDC, Budd SPV-2000, GEC Alsthom ALICE, Bombardier RDC, and Nippon Sharyo North American DMU, Adtranz PennDOT DMU).

Type II Equipment: Self-propelled vehicles that are not fully compliant with US Federal Railroad Administration requirement but are designed primarily for a railroad-operating environment (e.g.: Siemens Regio Sprinter, Adtranz Regio Shuttle, and Bombardier Talent, Adtranz Flexliner/IC-3 and Siemens VT-628.4/928.4).

Type III Equipment: Self-propelled vehicles that are not fully compliant with US Federal Railroad Administration requirement and are designed primarily for urban operating environments with mixed traffic (e.g.: Adtranz/Stadler/SLM GTW 2/6, Kinkisharyo DLRV).

1.4.2 Bus Rapid Transit

Bus rapid transit consists of buses operating in exclusive busways with on-line stations similar to LRT systems, or on roads with improvements to allow buses to bypass traffic congestion. A key attribute of a BRT system is the ability to employ express buses that combine feeder, line-haul and distribution functions. A range of vehicle technologies are available that can be matched to travel demand patterns, air quality and noise concerns.

The typical operating regime consists of a line haul service that operates in both directions in the BRT busway right-of-way stopping at each station just like a rail service. The buses used on this service are usually specially identified articulated or double articulated low floor buses. New technology buses that could be used include hybrid diesel-electric and diesel-trolley buses that are much quieter and produce significantly less pollution than the standard city bus.

The BRT stations are served by feeder buses and park and ride facilities just like a rail station. The key service difference between BRT and LRT is the ability of the BRT alignment to also accommodate express bus services that serve residential and employment/commercial centers beyond a convenient walking distance of the BRT right-of-way. These bus services travel to and from the BRT alignment on the local road system and enter and leave the BRT right-of-way via an exclusive bus ramp. Once in the BRT right-of-way these express buses may operate in a non-stop or limited stop mode to another exclusive ramp where they would again join the local road system.

1.4.3 Light Rail Transit

The technological descendant of the streetcar, a distinctive feature of light rail transit is that vehicles draw power from an overhead wire. LRT can operate in mixed traffic on tracks embedded in the street, on an at-grade right-of-way with street and pedestrian crossings, or on exclusive rights-of-way. Top speeds for LRT vehicles range from 45 to 60 miles per hour. Headways are typically more frequent (e. g., at least twice as often) than for commuter rail services. This makes the service more attractive for non-work trips that occur outside of peak hours, as does the [typically] closer stop spacing than for commuter rail. Key characteristics include:

LRT vehicles can operate as a single car or multi-unit train.

LRT can serve closely spaced stations (less than one mile apart) because of the ability of vehicles to accelerate and decelerate rapidly.

LRT vehicles cannot operate on the same tracks as railroad locomotives because of different vehicle strength requirements, unless they are schedule and time separated.

While there are no definitive standards, an LRT track located adjacent to freight tracks should be separated by at least 25 feet.

LRT services may operate in a traditional streetcar/tram mode – in mixed traffic on city streets, with stops as frequent as every ¼ mile. They also operate on exclusive rights-of-way with stops spaced over a mile apart. LRTs operate in these cities as upgrades of former streetcar routes (selected examples): Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Toronto. New LRT systems include Baltimore, Buffalo, Calgary, Denver, Hudson-Bergen (Jersey City), Los Angeles-Long Beach, Portland, Sacramento, St. Louis, San Diego, and San Jose. Their range of trip purposes served tends to be broader than for commuter rail. This results from both a higher level of service (frequency and stop spacing) and their setting vis-à-vis adjacent land uses enabling walk-in patronage.

1.5 PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

As shown on the accompanying MIS Process Organization Chart, The MIS process involves the participation of several groups throughout the study process which is coordinated by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) and conducted in accordance with the project development guidelines administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) is the local decision-making body for the Northeast Corridor MIS and is assisted by the Citizen Transit Advisory Group (CTAG), the Transit Management Group and the MIS Management Team. The appropriate local, state, and federal agencies are also involved to ensure that all applicable rules and regulations are followed. The MTC and CTAG meet monthly to review information at key steps in the study process and receive public comment and input as part of their decision-making process.

The Northeast Corridor Technical Team has been established to provide guidance and technical assistance for the project. The Technical Team meets monthly throughout the MIS process and includes representatives of the following agencies:

- Charlotte Area Transit System
- Charlotte Department of Transportation/ Engineering & Property Management
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission
- Charlotte Department of Social Services
- Neighborhood Development
- Cabarrus County
- City of Concord
- NCDOT
- Police/Schools
- Norfolk-Southern Corporation
- Amtrak
- UNCC

The Northeast Corridor MIS Management Team also coordinates project development with major stakeholders in the study area which are listed on the MIS Process Organization Chart.

The general public has also participated in the scoping process through public workshops, scoping meetings, neighborhood, business and civic events, the project web site, and information and comment opportunities provided at libraries, town halls, and citizen centers.

1.6 PROJECT SCHEDULE

The MIS process for the Northeast Corridor began in May 2000 and expected to conclude in December 2001. The official scoping notice was published in September 2000 and concluded in October 2000. During the scoping period, numerous meetings have been held with local governments, agencies, neighborhoods, stakeholders and business groups, and civic organizations and communities within the study area. The technical analyses will be conducted during the next nine months and the selection of the preferred alternative for the Northeast Corridor is planned for end of 2001. Additional rounds of public meetings will be held during this time to solicit input throughout the study process and to ensure that interested parties will have the opportunity to review project information and provide input related to the project. Key milestones of this process are:

- Scoping Process – May to October 2000
- Public Meetings – September 2000; January 2001; May 2001; August 2001; December 2001
- Technical Analyses/ MIS Report Preparation – September 2000 to August 2001
- Selection of Preferred Alternative – December 2001

2. PUBLIC NOTICE AND OUTREACH

The scoping process is designed to include the participation of the public, elected officials, and all interested governmental agencies to ensure that information about the project is available to interested parties and that opportunities are provided to obtain input on the alternatives and issues to be addressed in the MIS for the Northeast Corridor.

A wide variety of information tools and techniques are used to encourage public and agency participation and increase awareness by the community about the project. In addition to public meetings, other types of public outreach efforts include stakeholder interviews, neighborhood and civic association meetings, information kiosks and booths at special events, newsletters, brochures, mailers/flyers, local government access television programs, CATS web site, newspaper advertisements, and local government meetings.

CATS conducts an active public outreach program providing numerous opportunities to distribute information and receive feedback and comment from citizens, organizations, and groups that are interested in the project. The CATS database of nearly 2,700 persons and organizations was used to disseminate project information and invitations to the public scoping meetings. Included in this database are:

- CATS' Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) Members
- CATS' Citizens Transit Advisory Group (CTAG)
- CATS' Transit Services Advisory Committee (TSAC)
- CATS' Transit Management Group
- Mecklenburg Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Mecklenburg County, Iredell County, Cabarrus County
- City/Town Elected Officials and Staff of Charlotte, Concord, Harrisburg, Kannapolis
- City, County, State and National Elected Officials
- CMPC Board Members
- Federal, State, and Local Governmental Agencies
- Civic and Non-profit Groups
- Local Educational Groups
- Developers and Building Contractors
- Utility Companies
- Local Print and Electronic Media
- Neighborhood Associations
- Local Businesses
- Area Places of Worship

A list of the elected officials and area places of worship that received information on the scoping meetings is included in Appendix A.

2.1 PUBLIC NOTICES

Public notification of the corridor studies kickoff meeting and public scoping meetings included mailings, newspaper announcements, media advisories, and other types of communications as listed below. Copies of these types of notifications are in Appendix B.

Paid advertising:

- The Charlotte Observer (July 16, July 18, 2000)
- The Charlotte Post (July 14, 2000)
- The Leader (July 14, 2000)
- La Noticia (July 14, 2000)
- The Charlotte Observer (September 8, 17, and 18, 2000)
- The Charlotte Post (September 14, 2000)
- The Leader (September 14, 2000)
- La Noticia (September 14, 2000)
- Matthews Record (September 13, 2000)
- Lake Norman Times (September 13, 2000)

Government Channel Programming:

- *Inside Charlotte*: September 7, 2000 (program focused on transit program and scoping meeting information)
- *Government Channel Billboard*: September 7-28, 2000 (listed scoping meeting information)
- *On-the-Air*: September 13, 2000 (program focused on corridor development and countywide expansion of transit services, and scoping meeting information)

Miscellaneous Notifications:

- Postcards (direct mail to 2700 citizens in transit mailing database)
- Press Releases
- Meeting Posters (placed at CATS busses and transit stops)
- Transit website (www.ridetransit.org)
- City of Charlotte Public Meetings Calendar

2.2 PUBLIC OUTREACH

A quarterly newsletter, *Transitions*, prepared by CATS provides project information and updates on the progress of the MIS studies and is issued to an extensive public mailing list

that includes the media, elected officials, government and agency staff, community representatives, special interest groups, business, professional and civic associations.

Project updates and public meeting information is presented at the monthly meetings of the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), the Citizens Transit Advisory Group (CTAG), the Transit Management Group, and the Northeast Corridor Technical Team.

CATS has also presented information about the corridor projects at several civic organization meetings, special events, and stakeholder groups. The following table lists the community events at which CATS provided information about the transit programs and the corridor projects for both the North and Northeast Corridors.

**Charlotte Area Transit System
Communication Events for North and Northeast Corridors
April – October 2000**

MONTH	ACTIVITIES
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apartment Association • American Society of Civil Engineers – Charlotte Chapter • Davidson Environmental Action Coalition • State Transportation Finance Commission
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iredell County Mayors Meeting • Davidson Town Day • Lake Norman Days
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District 2 Town Hall Meeting • I-85 Public Meeting • Mooresville Downtown Commission • Appeared on taped talk show with Don Reid and Frank Barnes. • Appeared on radio call-in show with Mike Collins on WFAE. • Transit Talk Panel event was held on June 8th with over 80 people in attendance. Reviewed status of 2025 Plan implementation efforts. • Optimist Park Neighborhood Association • I-85 Improvement Study Public Meetings • First Union Customer Information Center Advisory Meeting
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Carolina Chapter of American Public Works Association
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlotte Rotary Club. • Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce. • North Tryon Development Corporation Board • Taped interview for Magic 96.1 radio public affairs program
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District 2 Town Hall Meeting. • Construction Financial Management Association • Presentation on Charlotte BRT efforts at the APTA Annual Meeting • Participated in Government Channel call-in show on transit
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Charlotte Rotary Club • North Tryon Day • UNCC Real Estate Advisory Board • Tryon North Development Corporation Kickoff Event

To obtain input from those citizens that live or work within the study area, a series of interviews with representatives of the communities in the Northeast Corridor was conducted during August-October 2000. The purpose of these interviews was to better understand the issues related to transit services and current and future land use patterns. Interviewees were asked about their expectations of a rapid transit system, concerns they might have about future land use patterns and transit service and any specific features of the study area that might need special consideration.

Within the Northeast Corridor a total of 16 stakeholders were interviewed. Respondents included representatives of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, representatives from residential and commercial neighborhood associations, and developers. The summary of the interviews is included in Appendix C.

3. PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

The scoping process as required by federal law a part of the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), is designed to encourage early participation of the public, elected officials, and interested governmental agencies in the decision-making process. The scoping process as part of the Northeast Corridor MIS was conducted to provide an opportunity for these groups to review the purpose and need for the project, alternatives to be considered, and to identify issues or concerns to be addressed in the study. The scoping process was conducted according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, FTA guidelines as specified in Section 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations part 771.123 (23 CFR 771.123), "Environmental Impact and Related Procedures", and other rules and regulations promulgated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

As part of the NEPA requirements, a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register on September 29, 2000 which described the project and included the public scoping meeting schedule. A separate scoping meeting notice was also sent in advance to pertinent agencies inviting them to attend the agency scoping meeting. Copies of these notices are included in Appendix D.

As part of the MIS process, a corridor studies kick-off meeting and a series of public scoping meetings were held during the time period from July through September 2000 in various locations within the study area. The purpose of these meetings were to announce the initiation of the project, present an overview of the MIS process, alternatives to be considered, and to receive input from interested citizens and agencies regarding the projects. A summary of the meeting content and the questions/comments/input from those attending the meetings is provided below.

3.1 PUBLIC MEETING INFORMATION

July 20, 2000 (5:30 - 8:30pm)	Corridor Studies Kickoff Meeting Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
September 26, 2000 (6:30-9:00pm)	Mallard Creek Scoping Meeting Mallard Creek Presbyterian Church
September 27, 2000 (5:30-8:30pm)	Center City Scoping Meeting Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
September 28, 2000 (6:30-9:00pm)	Sugaw Creek Scoping Meeting Sugaw Creek Recreation Center

3.2 PUBLIC NOTICES

Public notification of the corridor studies kickoff meeting and public scoping meetings included mailings, newspaper announcements and other types of communications are listed in Section 2.1 of this document.

3.3 HANDOUTS AND DISPLAYS

Informational materials available at the corridor studies kickoff meeting included:

1. South Corridor MIS, and Executive Summary, brochure and FAQ (handout)
2. 2025 Transit/Land-Use brochure (handout)
3. Transitions newsletter (handout)
4. Transit technologies primer (handout and display)
5. Land Use primer (handout and display)
6. Wheels of Change FAQ cards (handout)
7. Countywide Service Expansion FAQ cards and survey (handout)
8. CATS schedules (handout)
9. Employee Transportation Coordinator Program brochures (handout)
10. CATS Customer Service Cards (handout)
11. Mailing list sign-up cards (handout)
12. Comment (evaluation) cards (handout)

An information packet was available at the public scoping meetings and contained the following items:

1. Meeting Agenda (handout)
2. North and Northeast Corridor Study Teams (handout)
3. CATS Overview of the Transit/Land-Use Corridor Studies (handout)
4. CATS Fact Sheet on the Transit Services (handout)
5. Land Use Primer for the Land Use/Transit Planning Process (handout and display)
6. Transit Technology Primer for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Corridor MISs (handout and display)
7. Comment Sheet (handout)

Copies of these public scoping meeting handouts are included in Appendix E. Presentation boards and corridor study area maps showing general land use information were available for review and comment as well as general information about CATS services.

3.4 MEETING PROCEDURE

3.4.1 Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the corridor studies kickoff meeting was to provide citizens with an overview of the MIS process that is being conducted in the North, Northeast, Southeast, and West Corridors and to solicit comments/feedback prior to the scoping meetings scheduled for September 2000. The meeting was also an opportunity to obtain additional information about the South Corridor, the roads expansion plan, the Countywide Transit Services Plan, and the expansion of the Human Services Transportation program.

The purpose of the scoping meetings was to present information on the MIS being conducted for the Northeast Corridor project and to gain public input for the scoping phase of this study. A formal presentation was made by the study team to describe the purpose of the MIS, present potential alignment corridors and information related to land-use planning and transit-oriented development for the Northeast Corridor. The meeting also provided an opportunity for questions and comments and break-out sessions to discuss important issues and concerns regarding the projects.

3.4.2 Attendance

At all of these meetings, several members of the project team were present to give presentations, discuss the project with meeting attendees, and to record questions and comments. City of Charlotte staff present at the meeting included representatives from the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and the City Corporate Communications Department.

The public attendance at these meetings is listed below:

- Corridor Studies Kickoff Meeting 93 attendees
- Mallard Creek Scoping Meeting 10 attendees
- Center City Scoping Meeting 12 attendees
- Sugaw Creek Scoping Meeting 25 attendees

3.4.3 Presentations

The corridor studies kickoff meeting began with an hour-long open house during which citizens were able to circulate among several informational stations which focused on various facets of the 2025 Integrated Transit/Land-Use Plan. Following the open house, a formal presentation was given which gave an overview of the region's future planning efforts for the transit system and land use development. Following the presentation, citizens were able to attend individual presentations and discussion sessions on each transit corridor.

The public scoping meetings began a formal presentation beginning with an overview of the Charlotte Area Transit System Major Investment Studies for the Northeast Corridor, a description of the potential alignment alternatives and of the various transit technologies being considered. The land-use and transit-oriented development aspects of the corridor studies were reviewed as well as the goals of the public involvement program. An overview

of the county-wide (bus) transit study was also presented. Following a question and answer period, small-group breakout sessions were held to discuss various issues associated with the corridor studies. A copy of the presentation is included in Appendix E.

3.4.4 Public Participation

The following is a record of the verbal and written comments that were provided during the corridor studies kickoff meeting, the scoping meetings, breakout sessions and on comment cards distributed at each of meetings.

3.4.4.1 Corridor Studies Kickoff Meeting – July 20, 2000

A. Questions Posed to Citizens

1. What benefits might transit provide in this corridor?

Southeast:

- Offer incentives for high-quality development
- Help congestion problem
- More coordinated development for a seamless corridor with a mix of uses....smart growth
- Air quality
- Enhance pedestrian access in the entire area
- Better connection to the wedges
- Nodes along Indy to give Indy an “address”
- Allow entertainment transit trips
- Allow people choices and options in transportation
- More attention to transit issues in the corridor
- Creating opportunities in employment centers
- Allowing access and connectivity by design
- Enhance neighborhood design
- Get the cars off the road by offering the interconnectivity of Indy
- Provide enhancement in good quality business development in the corridor
- Make sure transit enhances the corridor
- Relieve congestion
- Improve air quality
- Provide an option of transit
- Could have fewer cars
- No competition between Indy and the transit corridor (could possibly harm Indy business)
- Provide a feeder to other transfer points (increase the network of buses)
- Improved safety

North

- Rail will drive development in North Corridor

Northeast

- Economic redevelopment of older part of N. Tryon
- Transit oriented development would increase quality of life

- Transit would attract more businesses to University Area
- Transit would be positive in linking UNCC to Uptown

West

- Improved air quality
- Involving various governments in decision making
- Improved access to the airport from Gastonia and regional access to the airport
- Economic development opportunities and re-development opportunities
- Alternative modes of transportation
- Accessibility to various employment centers
- Relieve airport parking problem
- Taking advantage of existing infrastructure
- Lower cost for transportation
- Increased mobility to airport and access
- Coordinated development and additional employment development along the corridor
- Less travel time

2. What concerns do you have about transit in this corridor?

South

- South Corridor station locations
- South Corridor alignment
- Property issues in South Corridor
- Trolley issues in South Corridor
- How will station locations be determined?
- What criteria will be used?
- Bicycle and Pedestrian access to stations

Southeast

- Could promote development in other corridor(s)
- Could create unwanted opportunities (in the wrong place)
- How will people be encouraged to use it?
- How will we make people choose transit
- Equity... this corridor is NOT getting its fair share
- Balancing act... this corridor competing with other transit needs
- How all the different corridors tie together
- How to make it safe to get to stations... pedestrians and bike riders
- Will work on the corridor force congestion on other roads
- How you maintain and prevent congestion from occurring
- How to get from one place to another... not everyone wants to go downtown

North

- Timing (especially with the I-77 widening)
- What is the time-competitiveness of commuter buses?
- If? When? How? How much noise in regard to rail?
- At what point will the decision be made between bus and rail?

- Potential location of stations: technology, noise, rail crossings, existing businesses, access to neighborhoods, improved land-use development
- Two-way system for commuting; employment along both ends of the corridor
- Railroad (freight) traffic at 36th Street
- Where are we in the discussions with Norfolk-Southern
- Structure land-uses so that more trips can be made than just commuting
- Davidson hopes for infill development
- Include Derita with Northeast Corridor
- Is there an advisory board representing Derita?
- What is the I-77 project schedule?
- Should there be a station for Derita?
- What is the criteria for station locations?
- Beautification along railroad lines
- Consideration of bus and rail simultaneously
- Will Derita be served by both North and Northeast?
- Will there be service to the University Park Area – this can be more easily served by the North Corridor
- How will the corridor be tied into Center City?

Northeast

- Northeast Corridor is split by I-85
- Parking issues for people who don't live near transit stops
- Negative impact on the Derita area
- Not comfortable with the I-85 alignment from 2025 Transit/Land Use Plan
- Will people accept the higher density?
- Prefer light-rail over buses
- Timeliness of the trip, will it be competitive?
- Railways are not attractive
- Station designs must be inviting
- Desire for bike racks at the stations
- Make sure the alignment is not a barrier for connectivity
- Will the current railway be straightened?
- Safety is an important aspect
- Placement of the alignment is important to serve the places that need to be served
- A feeder system is extremely important in the Northeast Corridor
- What is the difference between light-rail and commuter rail?
- Efficiency is important – speeds need to be sufficient
- Will the transit system serve future densities?
- Will transit serve the inner-connectivity between the region (how does transit effect the wedges?)
- Stations must be auto-friendly because people need to drive to the stations to use transit
- Transfers throughout the system must be time-effective
- Will dense housing stock be stable housing stock?
- The Northeast is mostly a single-family area and probably always will be
- We strongly recommend looking at what the future of the area will look like instead of the present

West

- Protect right of way
- Image of Charlotte... enhance gateways
- Plan for densities and a regional plan linking to Gaston County
- Cost of implementation for other cities and counties
- Runoff, erosion control due to construction
- Where will it cross the Catawba River?
- Look at I-485/Wilkinson design to accommodate transit
- Ensure/provide for various modes in the right of way
- Current transportation improvements *should* include transit
- Design of stations
- Safety; will there be additional resources?
- Broaden the scope of the corridor if the "line" extends beyond the county line
- Look at the linkage to downtown
- What about the wedges?
- How were the original corridors selected?
- Make sure bike coordinators are involved
- Safety for pedestrians and bicyclists around station areas
- Ensure good transfer in downtown
- Feeder connections
- Easy transfers
- Consider using the airport as a hub to tie in all of the corridors and downtown
- Ease and convenience to pay (pay on board, credit card, etc)
- CATS marketing: Which route(s) best meets my needs?

B. Comment Cards

1. In which corridor(s) are you interested?

- 16 people were interested in North Corridor
- 13 people were interested in Northeast Corridor
- 10 people were interested in Southeast Corridor
- 6 people were interested in South Corridor
- 12 people were interested in West Corridor
- 12 people were interested in more than one corridor

2. What do you feel is the primary purpose for having transit in your corridor?

- 22 people checked "Improve Commute"
- 12 people checked "Improve Access to Jobs"
- 14 people checked "Growth Management"
- 14 people checked "Community Revitalization / economic development"
- 17 people checked more than one box
- 2 people didn't check any boxes

3. Do you currently use the transit system?

8 people answered "yes":

- 5 checked "Jobs"
- 2 checked "Entertainment"

- 1 checked “Medical”
- 2 checked “School”
- 1 checked “Shopping”
- 3 checked “Other” (meeting, visiting, traveling, recreation, trolley)

21 people answered “no” ; reasons why included:

- Car, of course
- Need car often thru-out the day – mtgs outside office;
- Not available; Not easily accessible
- Live 5 min from work, no direct transit there; Type of job; In Chicago I utilized the transit there for all aspects of my life (that were not in walking distance) Live w/in “walking” distance of office, however spouse commutes...
- No nearby service / service hours, fica. poor /
- Not near destination
- Unfamiliar with routes / do not feel comfortable
- Inconvenient
- Car is faster, easier (bad reasons, I know)
- Retired
- Live in Gastonia & work in Bessimer City
- Don’t have one
- Not available
- Not available
- Work near home
- Buses are so inconvenient
- Inconvenient
- Still drive
- Not available near my home
- None available from my home
- Not convenient
- Need to drive car to places I need to go
- No suitable or convenient transit to either shopping or work
- I leave work uptown after 7 p.m.
- 4 people didn’t answer the question

4. What are the most important features of your corridor / community?

- We currently have a rail corridor let’s use it
- Railroads
- The natural potential
- Greenway – P&N Line Mass Transit Gastonia to Airport
- Relieving traffic Independence Blvd
- I-77 / Hwy. 21
- Ability to commute to Charlotte w/o using automobiles
- Neighborhoods
- New development
- Diversity in people, jobs, etc.
- Lovely community
- Trees & lot sizes
- ? Trees !
- Rail line is already there. Makes project feasible.

- Rail exists!
- Environment
- Too many cars.
- Downtown on rail line
- Mixed, urban
- Fast commute
- Unique small towns already in place along proposed corridor / train line and sprawling lake / resort / suburbia west of I-77
- Access to resources
- Fairly high density re-use of many older bldgs (South End) redevelopment
- Airport, business, access to Gastonia, Downtown
- 14 people didn't answer the question

5. This public meeting was informative

- 6 people "Strongly Agree"
- 26 people "Agree"
- 2 people "Neutral"
- 0 people "Disagree"
- 1 people "Strongly Disagree"
- 3 people didn't state their opinion

6. How did you find out about this meeting?

- 19 people were informed by the postcard
- 2 people were informed by the website
- 5 people were informed by the newspaper
- 1 person was informed by the TV
- 7 people were informed by word of mouth
- 10 people were informed by other means:
 - Bus
 - Consultant on corridor
 - City of Charlotte insert
 - MPO – Bob Cook
 - Fax
 - As a city employee
 - On the bus
- 3 people were informed by more than one resource
- 2 people didn't answer the question

7. What information would you like to be provided at future corridor meetings?

- Furnish a listing of benefits & concerns to all attendees
- Station locations for rail.
- P&N Greenway – depot location alternative transportation
- Dates and times
- What are you actually going to do!
- Similar
- Feasibility study – possible early rail service
- Information about zoning changes along transit corridors.

- Location & mode
- Detailed land use information
- Should stay in the corridor where interested
- Further developments & cost projections
- Timetable for SE corridor. Mode of transp. for SE corridor
- Schedules
- Current ridership – population
- Neighborhood development
- A compilation of information accumulated tonight.
- Unifying N & NE corridor – Derita –
- List of Mecklenburg County, City of Charlotte & Corridor Town(s) officials / players with contract information.
- Brief education / outline / summary of the process to obtain “FUNDING” for the transit plans.
- Traffic counts / infrastructure capacities & growth plans
- Customer tip surveys / mode issues (detailed)
- The look of a vehicle of a stop / station, how it meshes w/ roadway, parking (quality of it, safety lighting)

3.4.4.2 Mallard Creek Scoping Meeting – September 26, 2000

Questions:

Q: Why wasn't heavy rail technology discussed for this study?

A: Heavy rail technology is used mainly for higher density areas, in addition to being very expensive. Preliminary studies also concluded that this technology wasn't right for this area.

Q: Is there anything in particular driving these studies, whether it's business or growth.

A: There are several reasons, which were outlined in the 2025 Plan. First is the economic health of Charlotte's uptown. If uptown jobs become too difficult to get to, these employment centers will begin to drift out of the county leading to the center city's decline. Also, this transit will be designed to also get workers to jobs in the University area and even Mooresville where employers struggle to get their workers to and from work. Finally, it is important to sustain the quality of life in this area, by providing an alternative to the traffic congestion that currently ails the region.

Q: How does an alignment/technology get picked?

A: The MIS process helps the study team choose the right alignment, technology and land-use patterns. By talking with the community, we learn about the public's goals and needs. Once clearly defined, we have evaluation criteria to measure those items, which in the end will determine mode and alignment.

Q: How do we give input without studies being done first?

A: We need public input to conduct these studies to help shape a system for this corridor by hearing your needs and goals for this area. At the end of the process, we will have a recommendation, but we can't start formulating a financial plan until we determine the alignment/technology that is suited for this area.

Q: With this input, how we will know which corridor is next?

A: At this point, we have not determined which corridor will follow the South Corridor.

Q: What was meant by this corridor being a pioneer?

A: The University area is very unique. We will need to adapt examples of other cities to this corridor and develop the area and place transit stations appropriately to help shape the transit corridor.

Breakout Session (Group 1)

Major Investment Study Questions

What are your goals/issues for the corridor related to transit and land-use? (listed in priority)

- Efficient access to jobs (5 votes)
- Large special event developments need to be connected by transit (3 votes)
- Feeder bus needed as part of a total transit system. (2 votes)
- Good coverage of NE area (2 votes)
- East-West mobility needed. Better connections needed from corridor to corridor. Increase emphasis on traffic coming from all over to NE corridor (2 votes)
- Linkage needed from Uptown to University Research Park and access between retail areas (2 votes)
- How to get from major employment centers to Uptown faster (1 vote)
- Improved mobility on I-85 and other major arterials (Harris Blvd., Concord Mills, and Kings Grant)
- Need to get people from North (Cabarrus Co.) to the NE Corridor
- Economic impacts/benefits should be considered.
- Short term and long term emphasis needed.
- Shuttle service to hubs
- Regional linkages needed through efficient transit connections.

What areas should be served by transit in the future? (listed in priority)

- W.T. Harris/University area (3 votes)
- UNCC (3 votes)
- Charlotte Douglas Airport (2 votes)
- Concord Mills (1 vote)
- Kings Grant (1 vote)
- Hidden Valley (1 vote)
- TIAA (1 vote)
- Amtrak Center (1 vote)
- Transportation Center (1 vote)
- Blockbuster Pavilion (1 vote)

What additional alternatives should be considered?

- See map

Other comments

- Lower N. Tryon and Sugar Creek Road not suitable for transit.
- System should have a commuter rail mainline which will act as a spine, which will be fed by light rail and bus connectors.
- Commuter rail would be better for longer, faster trips (from Cabarrus into Charlotte).
- BRT is acceptable if service is efficient.
- LRT would be a better system to haul larger numbers of people; maybe even less environmental impacts; may attract more economical development.
- HOV lanes with buses may be effective.
- Rail in freeway corridor is not conducive to economic development or good land-use planning.
- Consider costs of systems
- Longer-term vision needed for entire system.
- Incremental benefits are important of transit. Some transit service sooner has advantages for area

Comment Sheets (1 returned)

Q: Why do you think improved transit services are needed in this corridor?

A: Growth. Roads and highways are not large enough for traffic.

Q: To date, several technology and alignment alternatives have been defined for review and evaluation as part of the project. Do you think any of these are not worth studying? (Please explain)

A: No

Q: Are there other alternatives that should be considered? (Please describe)

A: Not sure at this time.

Q: Which alternatives should have the highest priority for consideration? Why do you think these should have high priority?

A: Too early for me to say at this time. I'm still trying to learn the choices and process.

Q: Which alternatives should have the lowest priority for consideration? Why do you think these should have low priority?

A: Too early for me to say this time. I'm still trying to learn the choices and process.

Q: Do you have any concerns about the type of development that may occur or that may be needed to support a transit system?

A: Yes. Because of cost, land-use, environmental impacts and then river load factor.

Q: Which of the key issues, if any, are of particular interest or concern to you? (These include ridership, capital cost, operating cost, cost-effectiveness, financial feasibility, environmental impacts, and achievement of goals and objectives, land-use/development, role of the private sector) Are there any issues you feel the study should address?

A: Land-use, environmental impacts, costs and overall coverage within this district.

Q: Which of the Environmental Areas, if any, are of particular interest or concern to you? (These include socioeconomic conditions, cultural resources, visual impacts, traffic and parking, noise and vibration, ecology, energy, contamination, air quality, land development). Are there other areas you would like to see studied?

A: All of the above

Q: Have you any other comments you would like to make?

No comments received.

3.4.4.3 Center City Scoping Meeting – September 27, 2000

Questions:

Q: Where will the Center City terminus of the South line be – at the transit center?

A: It likely will be 9th or 10th Street in order to access the northern side of Uptown.

Q: Will the light rail track parallel the trolley line or will it share the line with the trolley?

A: The LRT line will share track with the trolley. A second track will be constructed parallel to the trolley track.

Q: How will the north corridor alignment come into the Center City especially if the technology is different from the South Corridor?

A: It depends on the LPA for the North Corridor and whether the intermodal facility proposed for West Trade St. is built. If the LPA is commuter rail, it likely will utilize the intermodal facility. If it is LRT, it will be linked to the South Corridor LRT. If it is BRT, it would utilize the east-west alignment (the transit corridor as identified in the Center City 2010 Plan).

Q: There's been talk about changing land-use in the Northeast Corridor, especially in the industrial areas. What would be the environmental impact of such changes?

A: The changes would be similar to what has happened in the South End, which was very industrial prior to redevelopment. The current Northeast Corridor is very similar in character to what the South Corridor used to be like. Redevelopment brought in federal grants and State support to help clean up Brownfields, so today it is much more environmentally sound. We likely would look for similar incentives for redevelopment with similar changes anticipated.

Q: Wouldn't such redevelopment delay the transit development process?

A: Redevelopment as we've described of the Northeast Corridor industrial areas would require less significant work than a larger Transit-Oriented Development site. And even TOD sites wouldn't happen full force all at once. Redevelopment would likely occur in a phased approach. So delay wouldn't be significant.

Q: What is the status of the Amtrak station on West Trade St.?

A: The State has been purchasing property needed for the intermodal station between 9th St. and the Greyhound station. Right now, they're also completing engineering and design work to make the station area compatible with freight traffic and to determine what it will take to make the station work.

Q: Define intermodal.

A: Serving intercity rail (Amtrak) and rail. Would not serve freight, however. We're also trying to work with NCDOT to have the design capable of serving bus service as well. In addition, we're looking at a potential trolley loop that could conceivably utilize the facility.

NCDOT recently met with the Friends of Fourth Ward. Both sides were surprised at some of the things they heard. As a result, NCDOT is working to mitigate the potential impact on neighborhoods and to seek a greater level of community involvement in designing the facility.

Breakout Session (Group 1)

Major Investment Study Questions

What are your goals/issues for the North Corridor related to transit and land-use? (listed in priority)

- Basic Shelters with standardized bike racks to protect pedestrians, cyclists and motorists (standard wave rack) (5 votes)
- West—Link airport to Uptown Charlotte; along with economic opportunities near the airport (4 votes)
- Transit continues to encourage TOD policies currently occurring in towns.
- Access to Concord Mills Mall (3 votes)
- Design stations that unify neighborhoods (3 votes)
- A lot of neighborhood input is needed in discussion in reference to redevelopment
- Northeast—Service addresses needs of UNCC area. Work and school are two main purposes of transit. (1 vote)
- Northeast—Look beyond UNCC to Concord, Kannapolis and Salisbury commuters
- Northeast—Getting people to the NE corridor, esp. commuters who work in the corridor.
- West—Redevelopment of areas such as Queensgate

What areas should be served by transit in the future? (listed in priority):

West Corridor

- Charlotte Douglas Airport (9 votes)
- Westerly Hills (2 votes)

- Wesley Heights (2 votes)
- Seversville (2 votes)
- Westover Hills (1 vote)
- Wilkinson Blvd. (1 vote)
- I-485 (Berryhill access)
- Revolution Park (1 vote)
- Billy Graham and Tyvola (1 vote)

North Corridor

- Downtown Huntersville (3 votes)
- Downtown Davidson (3 votes)
- Old Statesville/I-485 (2 votes)
- CPCC (2 votes)
- W.T. Harris/I-77 (2 votes)
- Lincoln Heights (2 votes)
- Downtown Cornelius (2 votes)
- Downtown Mooresville (2 votes)
- Mecklenburg Hwy. Near Mt. Mourne (1 vote)
- Fairview/I-77 (1 vote)
- Old Statesville/W.T. Harris (1 vote)
- Concord Mills (1 vote)

Northeast Corridor

- UNCC (10 votes)
- Concord Mills (5 votes)
- Univ. Research Park (3 votes)
- U.S. 49/College Downs (1 vote)
- Old Concord Rd/I-485 (1 vote)
- Plaza/W.T. Harris (east) (1 vote)
- Bridelwood (1 vote)
- Eastway/Glen Finddish (1 vote)
- U.S. 29/Ridgeview (1 vote)
- N. Graham St./Statesville (1 vote)
- N.Graham and Dalton Ave. (1 vote)
- Central Ave./Plaza (1 vote)
- Amtrak Intermodal Station (1 vote)
- Trade/McDowell St. (1 vote)

Southeast Corridor

- Village Lake (1 votes)
- Crown Point (1 vote)
- Downtown Matthews (1 vote)
- CPCC (1 vote)

What additional alternatives should be considered?

- None

Center City Questions

What urban design features should be included in the design of a transit street to make it memorable from the transit passenger/pedestrian's perspective?

- Should include areas outside 277
- Safety features such as good lighting and emergency phones
- Signal mechanisms should be incorporated into light rail project.
- Need facilities to accommodate bicyclists to make experience more enjoyable
- Integration of public art
- Consider low-floor technology for vehicles

Are there key issues or local sensitivities that should be considered during preparation of the Center City portion of the Major Investment Studies?

- Stations and technology should be sensitive to neighborhoods, and they should blend with the overall look of each neighborhood.
- Two terminals should be complementary in nature and linked aesthetically.

Other comments/questions

- Will LRT line be elevated or at street level as it expands through Center City?

3.4.4.4 Sugaw Creek Scoping Meeting – September 28, 2000

Questions:

Q: What characteristics define the corridors?

A: The corridors were defined in the 2025 Plan. It's essentially a five –corridor, county system, and paralleling roads, such as I-77, I-85, defined the corridors. Transit will provide an alternative to using these roads.

Q: My biggest concern is the bus routes. Ones that you pointed out already have bumper-to-bumper traffic. I think that additional money should be used on HOV lanes. I just don't see people on the bus. I don't see people on the train.

A: At this point in the study, all things are still being considered such as HOV lanes. And ultimately, we need to test where people are coming from and where they are going to and what the probability is that we can get some of those people out of their automobiles and onto mass transit whether it be light rail, commuter rail or busways.

Q: Has anyone considered using multiple transit methods for these corridors? I've heard there is trouble in the negotiations with the railroad. Any truth to that rumor?

A: Yes, we will be looking at issues of joint uses in transit development in all the corridors. In dealing with railroad companies, we have been contact with Norfolk Southern. They have provided us input on all of our alternatives as to whether they are feasible or non-feasible, given their current operations. They have indicated some concerns about the use of lighter rail vehicles in their right-of-way.

Q: Are there other places where drivers have evolved into transit users. If so, please describe this evolution?

A: In San Diego, state legislators were so convinced that rapid transit would work that they paid for their first line. Citizens were skeptical and dubbed it the “Tijuana line,” thinking the only riders would be day laborers. This line has attracted a cross section of riders, is considered a success and has resulted in additional lines.

In Portland, where they have coordinated transit and land-use, 60 percent of trips are made by transit. In Ottawa, they have experienced similar successes but instead of using rail, they use bus rapid transit.

Q: What will be the attraction to use transit?

A: It will take the transit operator’s education of the public about transit services. It will mean reaching out to the private sectors such as employers, who may assist in paying for transit services for their employees and developers who will construct on areas near or even owned by the transit operator.

Breakout Session (Group 1)

Major Investment Study Questions

What are your goals/issues for the North Corridor related to transit and land-use? (listed in priority)

- Bike and ride along corridors; green space within corridor—greenways; trails (2 votes)
- Connect neighborhoods, retail, pedestrian friendly, mixed-use development (1 vote)
- Improve service to Derita area—good location, consider a transit stop (1 vote)
- Direct access to the airport (1 vote)
- Coordinate with high speed rail to Raleigh (1 vote)
- Preserve green space and open space in the wedges and protect from future development
- UNCC is isolated (large student population) need university “Village Rider.”
- North Corridor; Park-n-Ride facilities for commuters
- Nevin Derita Area (Bus only at Peak)—Would like to see bus 7 days a week/extended hours (Route 13)

What areas should be served by transit in the future? (listed in priority) Note: This group commented on the NE corridor only.

- Amtrak Ctr. (1 vote)
- Old Concord and Harris Blvd. East (1 vote)
- UNCC (1 vote)
- Collegeview MHP and U.S. 49 (1 vote)
- North Davidson (1 vote)

What additional alternatives should be considered?

- See map

Other comments

- What about radial alignment?
- Is UNCC's administration interested in transit?
- Comment: There's got to be education as well as helping people realize what will happen once they arrive at their destination on transit.

Breakout Session (Group 2)

What are your goals/issues for the North Corridor related to transit and land-use? (no prioritization)

- Good blending of N/NE uses (Rail or BRT)
- Connections from North Corridor to NE corridor
- Future planning for transit stations (environmental concerns in the Northeast corridor)
- Look at corridor extension to Cabarrus County like South Iredell

What areas should be served by transit in the future? (listed in priority)

Northeast Corridor

- Old Concord and Rocky River (3 votes)
- 29 and Collegview MHP (2 votes)
- 49 near University area (2 votes)
- University City Blvd. (1 vote)
- University Research Park (1 vote)
- Sugar Creek and Tryon St. (1 vote)
- US 29 and Eastway (1 vote)
- Sugar Creek and I-85 (1 vote)

North Corridor

- N. Graham near Sugar Creek (3 votes)
- Downtown Davidson (1 vote)
- Old Statesville

What additional alternatives should be considered?

- Bus mixed w/HOV or rail
- Tryon Street use/if there's a bus lane

Other comments

- Give us connectivity between corridors
- Identify what a corridor is
- Continue comprehensive approach
- Look at outreach
- Ads and maps not large enough, should be more prominent, looked too much like real estate maps
- Meeting not well advertised

Comment Sheets (3 returned)

Q: Why do you think improved transit services are needed in this corridor?

A: The North/Northeast corridors are growing tremendously. Trips are getting longer and stress levels from driving frustrations are increasing.

The roads are congested. I would feel more freedom, if I knew I could use transit and not worry about getting stuck in traffic.

Q: To date, several technology and alignment alternatives have been defined for review and evaluation as part of the project. Do you think any of these are not worth studying? (Please explain)

No comments received.

Q: Are there other alternatives that should be considered? (Please describe)

No comments received.

Q: Which alternatives should have the highest priority for consideration? Why do you think these should have high priority?

A: I think the idea of creating diverse land-use development around stations is ambitious (not impossible), but park and ride options seem more feasible for those concerned with going from smaller towns in North Corridor and downtown.

Rail for North Corridor and BRT for NE. The 77 Corridor is extremely congested and there seems to be a lot of interest in rail along the (north) corridor especially in the (Mecklenburg County) towns.

Q: Which alternatives should have the lowest priority for consideration? Why do you think these should have low priority?

No comments received.

Q: Do you have any concerns about the type of development that may occur or that may be needed to support a transit system?

A: Density needed along with walkability and bikability.

No concerns. I think TOD makes great sense and helps preserve open space in other areas, which is so important to quality of life.

Q: Which of the key issues, if any, are of particular interest or concern to you? (These include ridership, capital cost, operating cost, cost-effectiveness, financial feasibility, environmental impacts, and achievement of goals and objectives, land-use/development, role of the private sector) Are there any issues you feel the study should address?

A: Very concerned about cost in general, especially considering how much this will cost and the possibility of low ridership

Q: Which of the Environmental Areas, if any, are of particular interest or concern to you? (These include socioeconomic conditions, cultural resources, visual impacts, traffic and parking, noise and vibration, ecology, energy, contamination, air quality, land development). Are there other areas you would like to see studied?

A: Air quality, ecology, open space and land development

Q: Have you any other comments you would like to make?

A: Advertising—These efforts will be ineffective if people are not informed. For example, I drive by the parking lot for Concord Express every day. I had no idea what this was until I heard about it on the radio. A sign appeared at the lot (small sign (and) no number to contact) only a few weeks ago. The radio dubbed this project a failure—no wonder.

3.4.4.5 Project Corridor Map Comments

In addition to the verbal and written comments provided at the public scoping meetings, citizens were given the opportunity to make written comments and suggestions for consideration which were recorded on maps of the project study area. These comments are shown on the following map titled *Northeast Corridor Public Scoping Meeting Citizen Comments*.

4. AGENCY SCOPING MEETING

4.1 MEETING INFORMATION

The Agency Scoping Meeting was held on September 27, 2000 at 10:00 am in Room 267 of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center in Center City Charlotte. The meeting provided federal, state, and local agencies an opportunity for questions and comments on all four Major Investment Study (MIS) corridors: Northeast, North, Southeast, and West.

4.2 PUBLIC NOTICES

Notification of the Agency Scoping Meeting was published in the Federal Register on September 29, 2000 and advance notification of the meeting was distributed to agencies in scoping invitation letters dated August 17, 2000 and August 31, 2000. Copies of these notices are included in Appendix D. The agencies that received notifications of the Agency Scoping Meeting include:

- Federal Transit Administration
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Federal Railroad Administration
- US Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Department of Agriculture
- US Department of Commerce
- US Department of Health and Human Services
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- US Department of the Interior – National Park Service
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Geological Survey
- US Natural Resources Conservation Service
- North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
- North Carolina Department of Transportation
- North Carolina Division of Emergency Management
- North Carolina Division of Forest Resources
- North Carolina Division of Water Quality
- North Carolina Natural Heritage Program
- North Carolina State Clearinghouse
- North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office
- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
- Charlotte/Douglas International Airport
- Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection

4.3 HANDOUTS AND DISPLAYS

A Scoping Packet notebook was mailed to each agency and contained the following items:

1. Charlotte Area Transit System Project Background
2. North Corridor Description/Alternatives
3. Northeast Corridor Description/Alternatives
4. Southeast Corridor Description/Alternatives
5. West Corridor Description/Alternatives
6. Center City Plan Development Approach
7. Appendices - Glossary of Terms, MIS Organizational Chart, 2025 Integrated Transit/Land-Use Plan, Land Use Primer, Transit Technology Primer, Public Involvement Plan, Comment Sheet, and four (4) Federal Register Notices (one for each study corridor).

4.4 MEETING PROCEDURE

4.4.1 Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to present information on all four corridor MISs (Northeast, North, Southeast, and West), initiate the NEPA environmental study process, discuss initial alternatives, identify key land use, transportation, and environmental issues, and provide an opportunity for questions and comments.

4.4.2 Attendance

Several members of the project team were present to give presentations, discuss the project with meeting attendees, and to record questions and comments. City of Charlotte staff present included representatives from the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, and the City Corporate Communications Department. Other team members present included representatives from the consultant firms working on the project.

Agencies attending the scoping meeting included the US Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection, and the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport.

4.4.3 Meeting Agenda

A slide presentation was given at the beginning of the meeting followed by a question and answer period. The presentation began with an overview of the Charlotte Area Transit System Major Investment Studies for the North, Northeast, Southeast, and West Corridors program, a description of the public involvement plan, and descriptions of the various transit technologies being considered. After the overview, each of the four corridors was described in detail, along with a discussion of the Center City portion of the corridors.

4.5 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

4.5.1 Verbal Comments from Meeting

Listed below are the questions and comments raised during the question and answer period following the slide presentation. A summary of the response given at the meeting is provided immediately following each question. Written comments prepared by federal, state, and local agencies are summarized in Section 5.0 of this report and contained in Appendix F.

Questions:

1. Have you taken environmental justice into consideration?

Yes – environmental justice has been and will continue to be considered on both a corridor and a regional level.

2. Will the air quality analysis direct the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative?

Air quality issues may affect the selection of stations and alternatives.

3. How will Lake Norman be developed? Will there be a greenway?

The Lake Norman area is growing rapidly. Station locations should not affect development.

4. Is commuter rail being used as mitigation for the I-77 widening?

Yes.

5. How will passenger rail service from Charlotte to Raleigh be affected with this project?

No real conflict is expected. The Amtrak station may need to move to Trade Street.

6. Is right of way along existing railroad tracks wide enough for two tracks?

Yes.

7. Do light rail and commuter rail run on different gauge tracks?

Typically they do, but they can use the same track.

Comments:

1. Environmental justice issues should be addressed in the study. The US EPA has guidance documents that discuss environmental justice.
2. FHWA noise standards will apply to noise issues.
3. The US ACOE should be contacted for a determination on which wetlands and streams are jurisdictional. All stations should be located outside of wetland areas. The project should not influence the use classifications of streams or further degrade streams that are already impaired.

4. The air quality analysis should calculate any decreases in emissions attributable to the project.
5. The air quality analysis should include carbon monoxide hot spots analyses for park-and-ride facilities and cross roads. A hotspot analysis for nitrogen oxides also may be needed.
6. Hazardous waste sites should be avoided, capped, or remediated.
7. Induced development impacts should be acknowledged in the study.
8. Cumulative impacts should be addressed in the environmental document.
9. Redevelopment should be encouraged over greenfield development.
10. Station design should incorporate provisions for bicyclists. Mecklenburg County supports bikeways.
11. Park-and-ride facilities may need permits from the County, depending on their size.
12. For Surface Water Management Areas, the project will need to comply with the local SWIM (Surface Water Improvements and Management Program) ordinances regarding buffers.

4.6 NORTHEAST CORRIDOR TECHNICAL TEAM

The Northeast Corridor Technical Team established for the project meets monthly to provide guidance and technical assistance on the project. At each meeting, a project status report and update is presented and feedback on the current project information is requested. The technical team has provided input at all major milestones of the MIS process to-date. Some of the key comments received include the development of project goals and objectives; a review of the possible alternative alignments, station locations and transit technologies for the corridor and how each option may or may not meet the local development goals, transportation needs, and community preferences; and coordination of the future planning efforts of the individual towns and communities that are within the study area. This input has helped to guide the decision-making process throughout the scoping phase and will continue to provide technical oversight for the remainder of the project.

5. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC AND AGENCY WRITTEN COMMENT

The formal comment period for the scoping phase of the Northeast Corridor MIS was from September 1, 2000 through October 16, 2000 (as stated in the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register in Appendix D). In addition to the comments received at the public meetings, written comments were received through letters, faxes, comments cards from the public, interest groups and organizations, and governmental agencies. A summary of these comments is presented below and the comment letters are included in Appendix F. All substantive comments and requests for consideration will be addressed as part of the Major Investment Study as per the requirements of the environmental review process.

5.1 CITIZEN COMMENTS

In addition to the comments received at the public scoping meetings, the following written comments were received in response to questions asked on the comment sheets which were submitted during the scoping process.

1. Why do you think improved transit services are needed in this corridor?

- I believe improved transit services and high-density land-use planning are critical to all the corridors. I live between the North and Northeast Corridors.
- Because of Charlotte's growth, transportation services such as mass rail transit are needed to reduce road congestion and transport citizens to jobs that are not in the center city.
- 1. Air quality 2. Natural resources – automobiles are not efficient use of resources 3. Urban sprawl – higher density needed
- Improvements are needed, because Charlotte can no longer afford to remain an automobile dependent city. The costs, well they are the environment and standard of living.
- Because just from the increased traffic that drivers seen in this area
- Too much traffic backlog
- Light rail – I-485/University area to uptown. Regional/commuter rail – Concord/Kannapolis to uptown Charlotte.

2. To date, several technology and alignment alternatives have been defined for review and evaluation as part of the project.

a. Do you think any of these are not worth studying?

- I'm unsure what this refers to
- Assess impact fees
- No
- Busway – routing too circuitous.

b. Are there other alternatives that should be considered?

- More walking/bicycle paths around UNCC
- I think the expansion is something that has to happen. However to make it work smoothly, I think city buses in more areas would help.
- HOV lanes on I-85 could supplement regional/commuter rail service from Concord area.
- No.

c. Which alternatives should have the highest priority for consideration? Why do you think these should have priority?

- Rail – most efficient in and around established areas or mix of bus and rail. Take bus to rail station and reverse.
- Limit growth
- Widen I-85 and complete I-495
- Light rail – link uptown with hospital, University Research Park, and University itself.

d. Which alternatives should have lowest priority for consideration? Why do you think these should have low priority?

- More and bigger roads

3. Do you have any concerns about the type of development that may occur or that may be needed to support a transit system?

- I support development that is pedestrian and mass transit friendly. I believe mixed use zoning leads to a higher quality of life.
- Not really, Charlotte is a very difficult place to drive around. I would like to see light rail going from north to south/east/west in Charlotte. With greater access, unemployment rates would decrease even further.
- High density development is key for success.
- No.
- TOD's needed. Due to spread out use pattern sensitivity needed in making changes.

4. Which of the key issues, if any, are of particular interest or concern to you? (These include ridership, capital cost operating cost, cost-effectiveness, financial feasibility, environmental impacts, achievement of goals and objectives, land use/development, role of private sector). Are there other issues you feel the study should address?

- Land use/development must be coordinated with transit planning. I favor light rail or train over busways.
- I would like to see the private sector get involved more here. Also, I want to make sure that our money is spent wisely during this project. I believe that ridership will increase each year.
- Have gas tax to provide resources to fund, encourage persons to use mass transit.
- No.
- Environmental impacts, land use/development, operating costs.

5. Which of the environmental areas, if any, are of particular interest or concern to you? (These include socioeconomic conditions, cultural resources, visual impacts, traffic and parking, noise and vibration, ecology, energy,

contamination, air quality, land development). Are there other areas you would like to see studied?

- Mixed use planning allows for affordable housing, pedestrian friendly conveniences, better air and a generally high quality of life.
- I want to make sure that every light rail stop in Charlotte looks good and parking will be a premium at most stops. Lastly, I want to make sure that each rail is energy efficient.
- No.
- Air quality, land development

6. Have you any other comments you would like to make?

- I definitely favor light rail and/or rail in the North and Northeast Corridors.
- I am pleased that Charlotte is making the effort to improve transportation by integrating rail transit. I want to reiterate that I feel Charlotte needs to have light rail going north/south and east/west. Bus only lanes are not a good solution to Charlotte's transportation problems.
- If Charlotte is to grow and thrive as a city, mass transit is an all or nothing approach. If it is not simple, easy and convenient to use, it will not be successful. All areas of the community – businesses, education, government and recreation must be “on board.”
- Yes, I submit an article I wrote from Citizens for Efficient Mass Transit newsletter I wrote on this corridor in 1999. (Northeast)

Additional written comments on the Northeast Corridor were submitted by the following organizations and are summarized below.

Tryon North Development Corporation

- The corporation advocates the development of a modern light/medium rail line in the North Tryon/University City/Cabarrus County corridor extending from the Center City Charlotte to the Town of Concord. Several reasons are listed in support of this concept including: will promote significant revitalization of North Tryon Street and North Charlotte; will provide direct access to major public and private facilities within the corridor; the significant potential for public/private investment in transit stations and other infrastructure development along the route.

University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC)

- Reasons are listed as to UNCC's support of the Northeast Corridor as being one of the highest priority transit corridors for the region and should be considered for light rail transit service including the significant residential and employment growth that has occurred and is estimated to continue for the Northeast, as well as the redevelopment and new development opportunities, and growing traffic congestion in the area.
- Request consideration of the Northeast Corridor as a candidate for light rail transit service.

University City Area Council (UCAC)

- The UCAC is developing a Conceptual and Strategic Plan for the University City area that will focus on the connectivity of the various activity clusters in the area and with

downtown Charlotte, the transformation of the University City area into a more urban environment. The UCAC suggest that these plans be coordinated with the transit planning for the Northeast Corridor.

5.2 GOVERNMENTAL REVIEW AGENCIES

Written comments were received from federal, state, and local agencies during the scoping process for the Northeast Corridor. A summary is provided below of the comments submitted by each of these agencies which had specific jurisdictional concerns for the Northeast Corridor. Copies of the comment letters are included in Appendix F.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (10-6-00)

The USDA stated that impacts to prime or unique farmlands within the project area should be evaluated for each alternative as required by the Farmland Protection Policy Act.

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (10-9-00)

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission stated that the following information would be helpful in their review of the environmental documents:

- Description of how the project will be integrated into the existing urban area to promote pedestrian friendly development.
- Use of existing right-of-ways instead of new location construction.
- How the project can avoid impacts to endangered, threatened or species of concern within the project area.
- Open space, farmland and floodplain preservation should be included in the overall planning of the project.
- Water supply, jurisdictional waters, required buffers and other surface water issues should be included in the EIS.
- Whenever possible, stations should be located in existing urbanized areas to avoid promoting sprawl.
- Construction practices should include “conservation development” instead of typical tree island plantings, curbing and guttering.
- Projections of anticipated reductions in miles per day of travel.

Federal Highway Administration (10-11-00)

FHWA offered the following comments:

- MIS needs to discuss the Southeast High Speed Rail project and assure proper coordination.
- More discussion needed on responsibilities related to researching rail agreements and ROW issues, and at-grade intersection issues and grade separations.

- Air quality information should be consistent among corridors.
- Should be agreement on the travel demand model to be used.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (10-12-00)

US EPA offered the following comments:

- Societal Issues – Environmental Justice and relocation impacts should be minimized as a result of this project.
- Wetlands – All alignments and station areas should avoid wetlands that are defined as jurisdictional wetlands.
- Water Quality – Impacts to waterbodies should be avoided and Best Management Practices used when it is unavoidable to cross streams an adequate buffer zones established.
- Air Quality – A microscale analysis should be conducted for vehicular queuing at intersections with wait times longer than normal red traffic lights.
- Noise – FHWA noise control criteria should be used to determine noise impacts produced by the transit project
- Hazardous Materials/Wastes – Any hazardous materials encountered during prospective construction should be coordinated with the State and EPA as needed.
- Induced Impacts – Induced developmental impacts should be considered; EPA prefers induced development to occur in brownfields as opposed to greenfields so that environmental disruption of new areas can be minimized.
- Cumulative Impacts – Cumulative impacts should consider other transit projects in the area and other private or federal projects in general that are existing, proposed or expected to occur within the 10-20 year horizon including the Charlotte-Raleigh commuter rail service.
- Multi-modal Transportation Projects – The rationale for multi-modal projects should be discussed.

N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Division of Parks and Recreation (10-13-00)

- Recommends that biological surveys be conducted for all transit corridors in order to avoid impacts to rare species or significant natural areas.

Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection (10-16-00)

- Air Quality – A CO hot-spot analysis will be required for those roadways crossed by light rail and must be performed at the light rail crossing and those signalized intersections on either side of the crossing. Hot-spot analyses may be required as part of the Transportation Facility Permit to Construct required for parking facilities associated with the stations and park and ride locations. Design of stations should

take into consideration the EPA's Energy Star Buildings Program including the Green Lights Programs.

- Water Quality – Special consideration should be given to the watershed areas in the project area to ensure that surface waters are protected from both point and non-point sources of pollution.
- Solid Waste and Groundwater – Land clearing and inert debris must be managed in accordance with the NC Solid Waste Management Rules and disposal of these wastes may be on-site when the location meets all siting requirements. It would be prudent to assess possibilities of drinking water well buffer encroachment for properties adjacent to expanded right-of-ways.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (11-6-00)

- Recommends surveying the project areas for endangered and threatened wildlife and plants species prior to any further planning or on-the-ground activities to ensure that no adverse impacts occur to these species.

6. SUMMARY OF MODIFICATIONS TO SCOPING ALTERNATIVES

As a result of an extensive public involvement program conducted for the scoping phase of the Northeast Corridor MIS project, a significant number of public comments, suggestions, and feedback was obtained from the communities in the study area. This public input was considered in the analysis of the range of alternatives being considered, and incorporated in the refinement of the alignments, modes, and station locations for the proposed transit corridor.

The following is a summary of the additions or modifications that were made to the alternatives to be carried forward in the MIS process as result of public an agency comments.

1. An alternative was developed that incorporates the UNCC community requests that high frequency transit service, and in particular, LRT be considered along US 29, providing good access to both the students and staff of the university. This alternative does not penetrate the campus at the request of the Chancellor's office.
2. As a result of concerns from the Hidden Valley community regarding potential reduction in quality of life because of high density/apartment developments at stations near their neighborhood, two options emerged: first, the alternative that places transit service along North Tryon, adjacent to their community, can locate stations at a distance from Hidden Valley. A second option was to retain an alternative that completely bypasses their community by using the NCRR right-of-way.
3. Interest from the business community to redevelop North Tryon between Uptown and Sugar Creek resulted in the development of a streetcar-type system along that stretch of N. Tryon that would cause minimum displacements while providing opportunities for redevelopment at stations.
4. Increased concerns with traffic and congestion in the University Research Park area resulted in developing a BRT alternative that penetrates the research park as well as provides service along US 29.
5. Interest from Cabarrus County in providing good access to jobs in Mecklenburg resulted in developing an end of line station at Concord Mills.
6. Elimination of consideration of commuter rail alternative along the NCRR corridor because it does not meet the goals and objectives of serving appropriate existing and future land uses of transit-oriented development; in addition, rail corridor has been identified as the potential corridor for the Southeast High Speed Rail project.

7. APPENDICES

The following appendices contain information referenced in Sections 1.0 through 6.0 of this document.

Appendix A: List of Elected Officials and Area Places of Worship Receiving Public Meeting Notices

Appendix B: Public Meeting Notifications and Advertisement

Appendix C: Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

Appendix D: Federal Register – Notice of Intent; Scoping Notification Letters

Appendix E: Scoping Meeting Handouts and Presentation

Appendix F: Written Comments From Public and Agencies

**APPENDIX A – LIST OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AND AREA PLACES OF WORSHIP
RECEIVING PUBLIC MEETING NOTICES**

APPENDIX B – PUBLIC MEETING NOTIFICATIONS AND ADVERTISEMENT

APPENDIX C – SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

**APPENDIX D – FEDERAL REGISTER – NOTICE OF INTENT AND SCOPING
NOTIFICATION LETTERS**

APPENDIX E – SCOPING MEETING HANDOUTS AND PRESENTATION

APPENDIX F – WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC AND AGENCIES