

ORANGE COUNTY
SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

Appendix C: Funding and Implementation Plan

October 2024



Table of Contents

	Page
1 Transit Funding.....	1
Short Range Transit Plan Budget	1
Additional Funding Opportunities	1
2 Implementation Plan by Strategy	4
Process Overview	4
Transit Service Strategies.....	4
Policy and Program Strategies	18
Capital Improvement Strategies	24

1 TRANSIT FUNDING

SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN BUDGET

Public transportation in Orange County is funded by a variety of federal, state, and local sources. Figure 1 shows the estimated budget for the SRTP fiscal years, based on existing funding and conversations with different fiscal entities in the region. OCTS has just under \$4 million a year to maintain their existing services and implement SRTP strategies. This budget provides a foundation for what the SRTP can hope to achieve by FY2030, though each budget source is subject to change.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allocates formula funding for transit based on urbanized area and state, depending on type of funds. OCTS receives 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grants for both the Durham and Burlington urbanized areas, and these amounts are determined through yearly split letters from the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) and the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization (BGMPO). OCTS also receives 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Grants through the DCHC MPO split letter. For estimating the budget for the SRTP, 5307 and 5339 funds from the FY2023 split letters are escalated by 2% each year until FY2026, after which the amounts remain constant, since the current federal funding authorization expires in FY2026.

FTA 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas are distributed through the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). In FY2025, NCDOT has allocated OCTS \$165,435 in 5311 funds, and the same amount is estimated for the following years.

At the state level, OCTS receives Rural Operating Assistance Program (ROAP) funds from NCDOT. In FY2023, OCTS was allocated \$211,284, an amount estimated to remain the same throughout the SRTP period.

Locally, OCTS receives funding from the Orange County Transit Tax, with the budget for each year defined by the Orange County Transit Plan and its Annual Work Program. Orange County also allocates money for OCTS in its annual budget. This amount fluctuates each year, so the estimated amount for the SRTP is an average of the FY2023 to FY2025 county budgets. Lastly, OCTS also receives a small amount of revenue from fares and charges for services, which are not assumed to grow greatly from the FY2023 amount shown here.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Many of the SRTP strategies will require additional funding beyond the above budget to implement. Shown in Figure 2 is a non-exhaustive list of funding sources that OCTS can pursue to increase its budget, though each opportunity has its own requirements.

Figure 1 Estimated Budget for SRTTP

Budget Source		FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030
Federal	5307 (DCHC MPO)	\$308,488	\$308,488	\$308,488	\$308,488	\$308,488
	5307 (BG MPO)	\$146,390	\$146,390	\$146,390	\$146,390	\$146,390
	5339	\$29,850	\$29,850	\$29,850	\$29,850	\$29,850
	5311	\$165,435	\$165,435	\$165,435	\$165,435	\$165,435
State	ROAP	\$211,284	\$211,284	\$211,284	\$211,284	\$211,284
Local	Orange County Transit Plan	\$1,315,446	\$1,348,332	\$1,382,040	\$1,416,591	\$1,452,006
	Fares	\$27,610	\$27,610	\$27,610	\$27,610	\$27,610
	Charges for Services	\$51,493	\$51,493	\$51,493	\$51,493	\$51,493
	Local Government Funds	\$1,541,131	\$1,541,131	\$1,541,131	\$1,541,131	\$1,541,131
Total Budget		\$3,797,127	\$3,830,013	\$3,863,722	\$3,898,273	\$3,933,688

Figure 2 Potential Funding Opportunities

Potential Funding	Administrator	Potential Strategy Types	Requirements
5310 Operating	NCDOT	Demand Response	50% Local Match
5310 Mobility Manager	NCDOT	Mobility Manager	New Staff or Job Description
Combined Capital Funds	NCDOT	Technology Improvements	Pre-award lead time
Purchase of Service	NCDOT	Demand Response, MOD	Coordinate with Departments of Social Services and Aging
Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation	DSS	Demand Response	Coordinate with Department of Social Services
Orange County Transit Plan	GoTriangle	Fixed Route, MOD, Demand Response	Adjust approved hourly rate for transit operations
5307 Urbanized Area	DCHC MPO	Capital Improvements	Report passenger-miles traveled
Regional Flexible Funding	DCHC MPO	Capital Improvements	Next cycle FY2028-2030
Mobility Innovation Grants	FTA	MOD, Technology Improvements	Discretionary Grant
Safe Streets & Roads for All (SS4A)	FTA	Walking Access to Transit	Discretionary Grant

NCDOT administers a series of state and federal grants that OCTS can apply for. FTA 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities funds can be used for demand response service operations—with a 50% local match—or to hire a mobility manager. NCDOT's Combined Capital Funds can be used for capital purchases, such as improving technology, though applications for these funds are released every few years. OCTS can also coordinate with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Aging to access funds from NCDOT allocated to purchasing service for older adults and people with disabilities. The Department of Social Services also coordinates non-emergency medical transportation, which can be reimbursed through Medicaid. OCTS can help DSS provide more of these trips and submit the required reimbursement documentation to receive additional funding.

Additionally, the operating cost per hour for OCTS services has increased over the last few years, and the amount approved by the Orange County Transit Plan is less than the amount to operate service. OCTS can work with GoTriangle and the Transit

Plan partners to update the approved costs and potentially increase funding for Transit Plan projects.

DCHC MPO also has a series of grants that OCTS can apply for. Through its Regional Flexible Funding Program, for which the next funding cycle is FY2028 to FY2030, OCTS can secure funds for capital projects that improve access to transit. OCTS may also be able to unlock more 5307 funds if it were to report additional metrics (such as passenger-miles travelled) to the FTA.

Lastly, the FTA has many discretionary grants designed to help fund capital improvement projects, pilot new technology, and other facets of operating a transit agency. Every few years, they typically unveil a mobility innovation grant program, which can be used to fund microtransit and other new technologies. The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program awards funds annually for the implementation of projects that improve traffic safety in accordance with a comprehensive safety action plan.

2 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN BY STRATEGY

PROCESS OVERVIEW

After evaluating all proposed strategies, as described in Appendix B, projects were aligned with the projected budget for the Fiscal Year 2026 to 2030 period. Adjustments to the proposals were made as needed to fit the funding availability and technical considerations, such as availability of bus drivers. Not all strategies could fit within the budget or timeframe, but those that scored highly in the evaluation are included in this document to guide future planning efforts.

Additional funding sources were also identified and are tied to the strategies they could fund. As some of these are competitive grants, it is not guaranteed that the funding will be available for the strategies.

TRANSIT SERVICE STRATEGIES

Short Term projects should be implemented early in the SRTP timeframe, and resources are available within the current known budget. Short term transit service strategies include:

- Mobility on Demand Service Improvements
- Discontinue Orange-Alamance Connector
- Hillsborough Circulator Improvements Phase 1
- Mebane Circulator
- Hill to Hill Consolidation Phase 1

Medium Term projects should be implemented later in the SRTP timeframe, and may require additional funding sources such as winning grant money. Medium term transit service strategies include:

- Demand Response Weekend Service

Long Term projects should be pursued after the SRTP timeframe ends, as funding is currently unavailable. Long term transit service strategies include:

- Hillsborough Circulator Improvements Phase 2
- Hill to Hill Consolidation Phase 2
- Reinstate Updated Orange-Alamance Connector
- MOD Service Span Expansion

MOBILITY ON DEMAND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

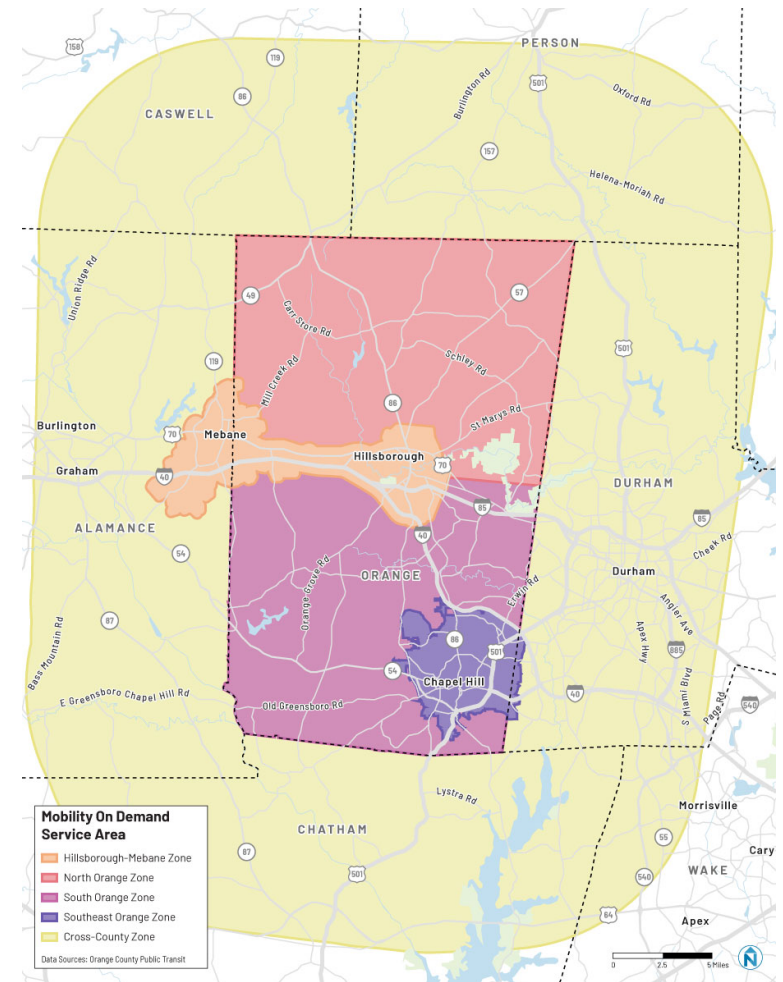
Short Term

Background: Orange County MOD is underused, given the potential demand within the service area. Microtransit is well suited for the density of much of Orange County and can provide the public with high-quality and low-cost transportation options for those who cannot or choose not to drive.

Strategy Overview: Create zones for faster, cheaper trips within municipalities and consistent wait times for rural trips. The ability to book trips by making a phone call will also be added. No changes to hours of service are proposed within the S RTP timeframe.

- Hillsborough-Mebane Zone: Shorter wait times within this zone
- North and South Orange Zones: Dedicated vehicles for each zone to make wait times more consistent
- Southeast Zone: Trips cannot both start and end in this zone
- Cross-County: This zone will extend 10 miles out from the Orange County border, covering key rural and urban destinations in neighboring counties. Trips cannot both begin and end within this zone.

	Existing	Proposed
Span of Service		
Monday to Thursday	8 AM – 5 PM	8 AM – 5 PM
Friday	8 AM – 9 PM	8 AM – 9 PM
Saturday	9 AM – 5 PM	9 AM – 5 PM



MOBILITY ON DEMAND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS (CONT.)

Funding sources: Federal formula funds, fare revenue, local government funds

Project Phase	Annual Revenue Hours	Fiscal Year 2026	Fiscal Year 2027	Fiscal Year 2028	Fiscal Year 2029	Fiscal Year 2030
Phase 1	7,144	\$842,099.00	-	-	-	-
Phase 2	11,466	-	\$1,385,343.62	\$1,419,977.21	\$1,455,476.64	\$1,491,863.56

Implementation steps:

1. Work with technology vendor to implement zones
2. Update website to include:
 - a. Zone and service area map
 - b. Wait time information
 - c. Call-in number for phone booking
3. Phase in additional vehicles, per table below

	Monday to Friday			Saturday
	8 AM to 10 AM	10 AM to 4 PM	4 PM to 5 PM (9PM Fridays)	9 AM to 5 PM
Phase 1	2 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 for Hillsborough-Mebane and North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange 	3 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 for Hillsborough-Mebane ▪ 1 for North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange 	2 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 for Hillsborough-Mebane and North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange 	2 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 for Hillsborough-Mebane and North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange
Phase 2	3 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 for Hillsborough-Mebane ▪ 1 for North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange 	5 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 for Hillsborough-Mebane ▪ 1 North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange ▪ 1 floating/unassigned 	3 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 for Hillsborough-Mebane ▪ 1 for North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange 	3 Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 for Hillsborough-Mebane ▪ 1 for North Orange ▪ 1 for South and Southeast Orange

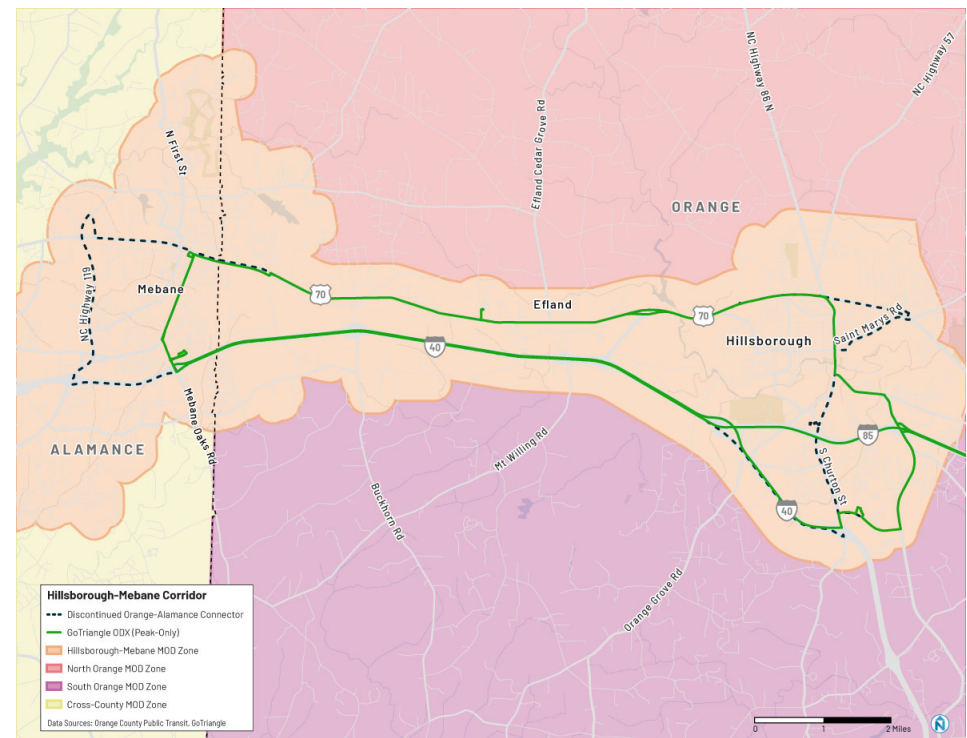
DISCONTINUE ORANGE-ALAMANCE CONNECTOR

Short Term

Background: The Orange-Alamance Connector is a low ridership route that offers redundant service with the GoTriangle Orange-Durham Express (ODX). The rider base of this route is likely better served by on-demand service zones, since they will have more direct access to destinations.

Strategy Overview: Formalize the elimination of the Orange-Alamance Connector and reinvest the resources into other transit service projects. With the improved MOD service zones, residents along the Mebane-Hillsborough corridor will still have access to transportation service, as well as continued service from the GoTriangle ODX during peak hours, the new Mebane Circulator, and improved Hillsborough Circulator.

	Existing	Proposed
<i>Span of Service</i>		
Monday to Friday	10 AM – 3 PM	-
<i>Frequency</i>		
Monday to Friday	60 minutes	-



DISCONTINUE ORANGE-ALAMANCE CONNECTOR (CONT.)

Funding sources: This project does not require funding. Savings from this project can be used to support the operation of the Mebane Circulator.

Project Phase	Annual Revenue Hours	Fiscal Year 2026	Fiscal Year 2027	Fiscal Year 2028	Fiscal Year 2029	Fiscal Year 2030
Existing	2,500	-	-	-	-	-
Proposal	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Implementation steps:

1. Inform residents and riders of proposed service change through processes defined in OCTS’s Title VI Plan.
2. Place signage at existing Orange-Alamance Connector stops to notify riders of service change and provide information on other services along the corridor, including MOD.
3. Remove Orange-Alamance Connector from website and provide information on available alternatives for residents along the corridor, including MOD.
4. Use funds for other approved transit operating costs.

HILLSBOROUGH CIRCULATOR IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 1

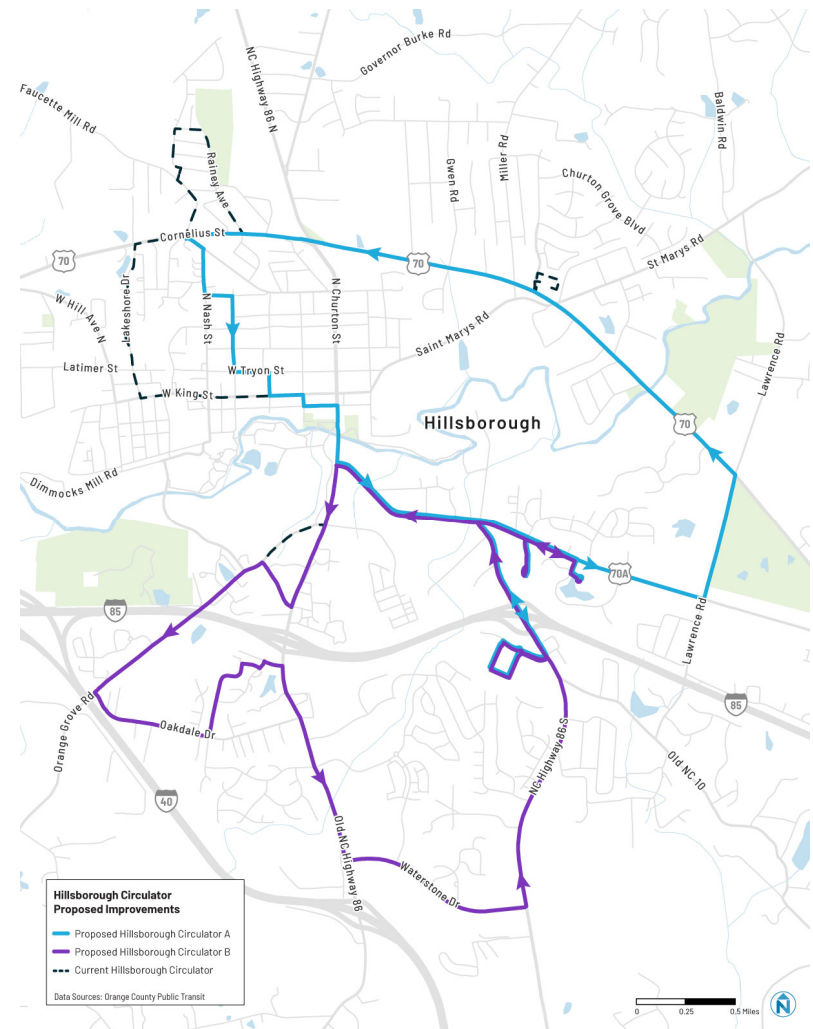
Short Term

Background: The Hillsborough Circulator is the highest ridership OCTS route and is the primary option for Hillsborough residents to travel between key destinations in the town without a car. The route often runs behind schedule, as it takes approximately 60 minutes to complete one trip and it runs every hour. The Hillsborough Circulator also only runs in one direction, making residents ride the full loop, even if they only need to get to the stop before they board.

Strategy Overview: Create an improved Hillsborough Circulator service that is more efficient, on-time, and frequent. The improved service will be split into two separate routes, Hillsborough Circulator A and Hillsborough Circulator B.

- Reduce route deviations at Rainey Ave (Fairview Park), Orange Grove Road, and Scotswood Road (Food Lion) to improve schedule reliability by decreasing the running time.
- Split route into two patterns, which can both run in under 45 minutes per cycle.
- Expand the service hours and increase frequency of both routes.

	Existing	Proposed
Span of Service		
Monday to Friday	7 AM – 5 PM	6:30 AM – 6:30 PM
Frequency		
Monday to Friday	60 minutes	45 minutes



HILLSBOROUGH CIRCULATOR IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 1 (CONT.)

Funding sources: Existing Transit Plan funds, federal formula funds, local government funds.

Project Phase	Annual Revenue Hours	Fiscal Year 2026	Fiscal Year 2027	Fiscal Year 2028	Fiscal Year 2029	Fiscal Year 2030
Existing	2,500	-	-	-	-	-
Proposal	5,750	\$724,931.25	\$743,054.53	\$761,630.89	\$780,671.67	\$800,188.46

Implementation steps:

1. Inform residents and riders of proposed service change through processes defined in OCTS’s Title VI Plan.
2. Update bus stop signs, install new signs and new stops where needed.
3. Notify residents and riders of upcoming service change through updating the website, a social media campaign, signage at bus stops and key activity centers, and communications through partner organizations.
4. Implement route and schedule changes.
5. Apply for capital grants for bus stop improvements.
6. Continue upgrading bus stops and communicating changes.

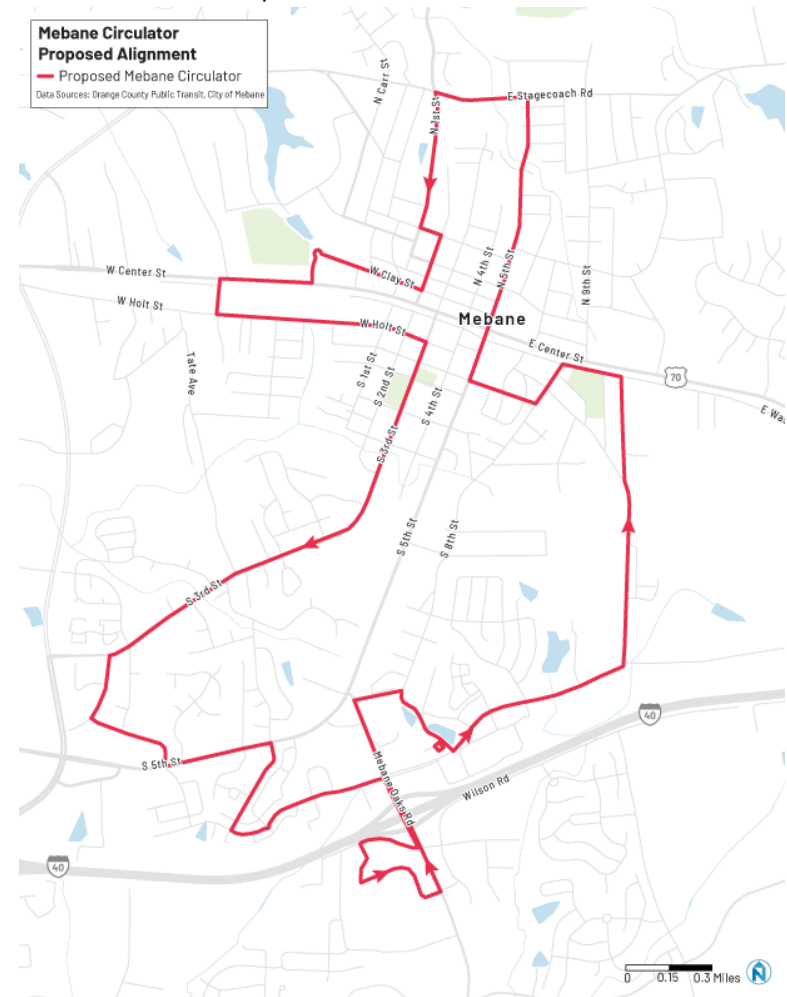
MEBANE CIRCULATOR

Short Term

Background: The City of Mebane has planned to establish a local bus route, which will take place in the form of a circulator that serves key destinations throughout Mebane. The Orange-Alamance Connector currently serves Mebane, which provides Mebane connections to Hillsborough and other localities via route transfer.

Strategy Overview: Implement the Mebane Circulator as adopted in the Mebane Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the BGMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The Mebane Circulator will run every 60 minutes from 7 AM – 6 PM on Monday through Friday and will not initially offer weekend service.

	Existing	Proposed
Span of Service		
Monday to Friday	-	7 AM – 6 PM
Frequency		
Monday to Friday	-	60 minutes



MEBANE CIRCULATOR (CONT.)

Funding sources: Existing Transit Plan funds, federal formula funds, local government funds.

Project Phase	Annual Revenue Hours	Fiscal Year 2026	Fiscal Year 2027	Fiscal Year 2028	Fiscal Year 2029	Fiscal Year 2030
Proposal	2,750	\$346,706.25	\$355,373.91	\$364,258.25	\$373,364.71	\$382,698.83

Implementation steps:

1. Inform residents and riders of proposed service change through processes defined in OCTS’s Title VI Plan.
2. Install bus stop signs at new stops locations.
3. Notify residents and riders of upcoming new service through updating the website, a social media campaign, signage at bus stops and key activity centers, and communications through partner organizations.
4. Implement new route.
5. Apply for capital grants for bus stop improvements.
6. Continue upgrading bus stops and communicating changes.

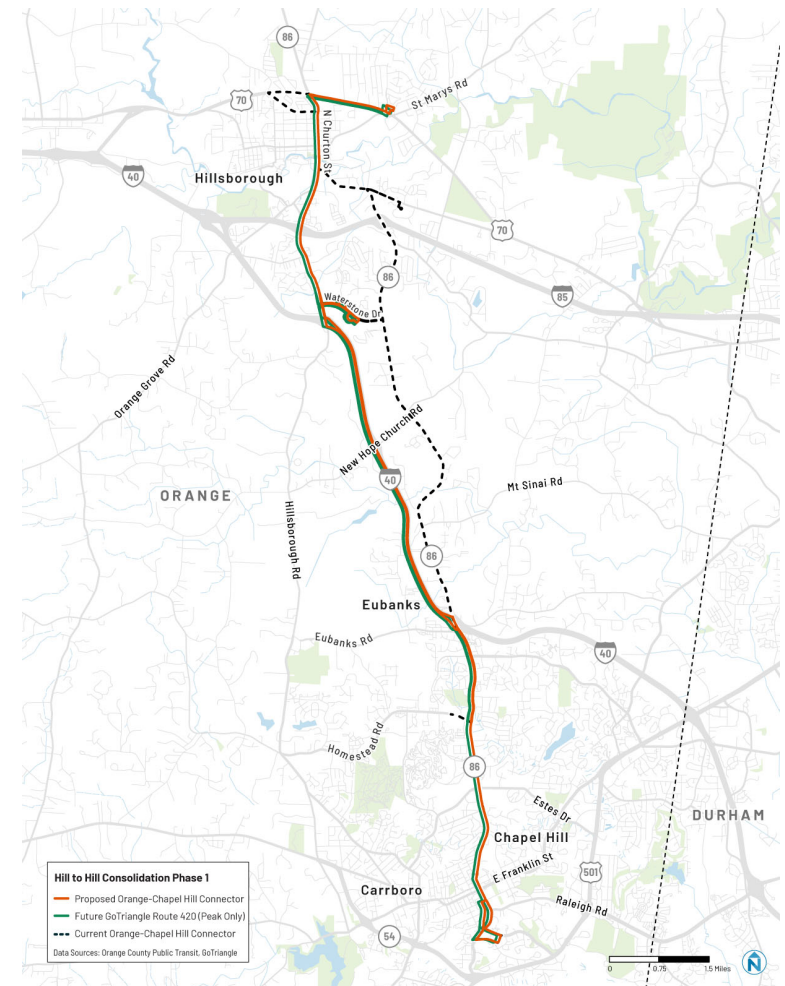
HILL TO HILL CONSOLIDATION PHASE 1

Short Term

Background: The Orange-Chapel Hill Connector provides midday and local coverage between Chapel Hill and Hillsborough, while GoTriangle Route 420 operates during the peak commute hours only and with fewer local stops. The similar but still deviating route patterns can confuse riders, and there is some service redundancy in the current schedule.

Strategy Overview: Adjust the route alignment of the Orange-Chapel Hill Connector to match the alignment and stops of Route 420, and continue conversations with GoTriangle on coordination and consolidation of the two routes. Local connections in Hillsborough can be made to both Hillsborough Circulator loops. This Phase does not fully consolidate the two routes, and rather focuses on running them along the same route pattern and to be less redundant, allowing for full consolidation in the future.

	Existing OCH	Proposed OCH
Span of Service		
Monday to Friday	8:30 AM – 4:30 PM	8:30 AM – 3:30 PM
Frequency		
Monday to Friday	60 minutes	60 minutes



HILL TO HILL CONSOLIDATION PHASE 1 (CONT.)

Funding sources: This strategy provides some cost savings that can be used to cover increased costs due to inflation.

Project Phase	Annual Revenue Hours	Fiscal Year 2026	Fiscal Year 2027	Fiscal Year 2028	Fiscal Year 2029	Fiscal Year 2030
Existing	4,000	\$504,300.00				
Proposal	3,500		\$452,294.06	\$463,601.41	\$475,191.45	\$487,071.24

Implementation steps:

1. Continue conversations with GoTriangle on coordination and consolidation of Route 420 and the Orange-Chapel Hill Connector.
2. Inform residents and riders of proposed service change through processes defined in OCTS’s Title VI Plan.
3. Update bus stop signage along corridor
4. Notify residents and riders of upcoming service change through updating the website, a social media campaign, signage at bus stops and key activity centers, and communications through partner organizations.
5. Implement route and span changes at the same time as the alignment change to GoTriangle Route 420.
 - a. First trip: Chapel Hill to Hillsborough 8:30 AM, Hillsborough to Chapel Hill 9:30 AM
 - b. Last trip: Chapel Hill to Hillsborough 2:30 PM, Hillsborough to Chapel Hill 3:30 PM
6. Update online and print materials for both routes to reference each other.
7. Work with UNC to fully incorporate OCTS into student and worker transit pass programs.
8. If and when GoTriangle Route 420 is realigned to Highway 40 and away from the Hillsborough Walmart, ensure that rider outreach highlights alternative travel options, including Mobility On Demand and the future extension of Chapel Hill Transit Route D to Patterson Place.

DEMAND RESPONSE WEEKEND SERVICE

Medium Term

Background: Program-based demand response riders are not peak-oriented, and many riders use it to get to non-work destinations. Currently, hours on Saturday are limited and not clearly defined, and no service is offered on Sunday. This limits the types of medical trips that OCTS can provide, cutting off a potential funding source.

Strategy Overview: Operate program-based demand response services from 9 AM to 5 PM on both Saturdays and Sundays.

	Existing	Proposed
<i>Span of Service</i>		
Monday to Friday	8 AM – 5 PM	8 AM – 5 PM
Saturday	“Limited”	9 AM – 5 PM
Sunday	-	9 AM – 5 PM

DEMAND RESPONSE WEEKEND SERVICE (CONT.)

Funding sources: Existing Transit Plan funds, federal formula funds, local government funds.

Project Phase	Annual Revenue Hours	Fiscal Year 2026	Fiscal Year 2027	Fiscal Year 2028	Fiscal Year 2029	Fiscal Year 2030
Existing	8,836	\$1,032,486.60	\$1,058,298.77	-	-	-
Proposal	9,644	-	-	\$1,183,913.95	\$1,213,511.80	\$1,243,849.60

*Weekend annual revenue hours and cost estimates are based on historical ridership and trip purpose trends

Implementation steps:

1. Supplement current demand response funding sources.
 - a. Leverage 5310 operating funds with 50% local match for currently operating Demand Response service.
 - b. Work with the Department of Social Services and Department of Aging to purchase trips with a smaller local match.
 - c. Improve Medicaid reimbursement for currently operating trips.
2. Determine if funding levels are adequate for implementation of weekend service in the following fiscal year.
3. Begin hiring additional drivers for service expansion.
4. Inform residents and riders of proposed service change through processes defined in OCTS’s Title VI Plan.
5. Implement changes, with clear hours on website and advertisement through partner departments.
6. Seek out additional Non-Emergency Medical Transportation funding options now available due to provision of Sunday service.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

HILLSBOROUGH CIRCULATOR IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 2

Background: After the Hillsborough Circulator has been split into two routes, increasing and improving the service is necessary. Transit demand during the peak hours is not necessarily much higher than it is during the off-peak hours, and there are a lot of riders that utilize the service for running errands.

Strategy Overview: Implement Saturday service, which will have 9 AM – 5 PM spans with buses every 30 minutes. In addition, Monday through Friday will have spans from 6:30 AM – 6:30 PM and buses every 30 minutes.

HILL TO HILL CONSOLIDATION PHASE 2

Background: After operating the Orange-Chapel Hill Connector and GoTriangle Route 420 with more coordination and reduced redundancy, service levels can be improved through full consolidation of the two routes. Public engagement also indicated strong interest in evening and weekend service between the municipalities.

Strategy Overview: Fully consolidate the Orange-Chapel Hill Connector with GoTriangle Route 420 along the Highway 40 alignment. Peak operation of the route will require three 40' buses to accommodate ridership demand and maintain frequency. The consolidated service should consider implementing Saturday service and operating later in the evening.

REINSTATE UPDATED ORANGE-ALAMANCE CONNECTOR

Background: While the Orange-Alamance Connector has generated low ridership during its operation, existing conditions and public engagement reflected the demand for connections between Mebane and Hillsborough. The route has a long travel time and short span, limiting its potential for success. Density along the corridor is currently low, but residential, commercial, and industrial developments are underway and may drive demand for transit in the future.

Strategy Overview: Bring back a modified version of the Orange-Alamance Connector that runs bi-directionally on Highway 70, with connections at Mebane Cone Health Park and Ride and the Hillsborough Walmart. With the proposed alignment change of the GoTriangle ODX to improve travel times to Durham and less focus on serving local stops, run the Orange-Alamance Connector all day, matching the hours of the circulator routes.

MOD SERVICE SPAN EXPANSION

Background: In conjunction with the expended MOD service zones that are part of the short-term strategies, MOD service hours should be expanded to adequately serve the riders of Orange County, as there is local transit demand for services outside traditional commuting windows.

Strategy Overview: Service hours will be expanded on all days of the week and Sunday service will be implemented. Service will run Monday to Friday 8 AM to 10 PM, Saturday 9 AM to 10 PM, and Sunday 9 AM to 8 PM.

POLICY AND PROGRAM STRATEGIES

Short Term recommended policies or programs that OCTS could implement in the early years of the SRTP with currently available administrative funding include:

- Alternative Fare Payment
- Transit Information Campaign
- Improve Demand Response Booking

Medium Term policies or programs that require OCTS to apply for additional funds include:

- Hire Mobility Manager
- Conduct Fare Study

ALTERNATIVE FARE PAYMENT

Short Term

Background: MOD and Orange-Chapel Hill Connector vehicles are not able to take cash as fare payment, which can create barriers for people without easy access to mobile banking. OCTS fares are also not integrated with other regional providers, such as GoTriangle.

Strategy Overview: Provide cash loading options for fare payment cards to better serve people with limited banking or smartphone access, and work to integrate with other transit agencies in the region that utilize UMO Pass.

Funding Sources: Cost neutral, requires staff time

Implementation Steps:

1. Continue ongoing conversations with UMO for cash purchase options at Food Lion
2. Add cash loading options at more locations, including the INCOM chain of retailers
3. During the next contract renewal for fare payment technology, update the contract to include Orange County as part of the same region as GoTriangle and GoRaleigh to allow for better fare integration. Also work with UNC to integrate OCTS services into their student and worker transit programs.

TRANSIT INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

Short Term

Background: Many Orange County residents do not fully understand how to ride transit and what their transit options are. The transit information campaign would cover fixed routes, mobility on-demand, and ADA services. Through both rounds of public engagement, improving transit information was identified as a high priority.

Strategy Overview: The promotional campaign would provide information on services, their destinations, how to use each service, and other information that is relevant to the service. On-demand service would be a key focus, specifically around the expanded service zones and where they cover, and how to book trips would be the main emphasis.

Improving the availability of transit information is an additional component of the transit information campaign. Improving the available information about the transit system could include the publishing of real-time travel information using live GTFS publishing.

As funding and grants allow in the future, OCTS should consider hiring professional marketing services to design and implement this transit information campaign.

Funding Sources: Administrative staff time within existing budget, limited advertising costs

Implementation steps:

1. Publish live GTFS to Google Maps and Transit App to improve real-time information for existing transit riders
2. If funding allows, work with marketing firm to execute broad information campaign across multiple mediums
3. Plan and execute promotional campaign, recommended in Fiscal Year 2027. Components of the campaign should include:
 - a. Updates to the OCTS website and online information – ensuring clear, accurate, and consistent information that is easy to find
 - b. Development of transit information posters, fliers, and social media graphics
 - c. Partnerships with local governments, regional and local stakeholders, and other Orange County departments to help share information about transit services
 - d. Holding pop-up events and information sessions at key community destinations

IMPROVE DEMAND RESPONSE BOOKING

Short Term

Background: Riders expressed confusion about how to book demand response trips during public feedback opportunities. Most of the confusion came around how and where to book trips—online, over phone, by app—and the application process. Additionally, the Medicaid reimbursement process will be improved, making it easier for OCTS to submit for reimbursement.

Strategy Overview: Ensuring the demand response application process is streamlined so that prospective riders are able to book services more quickly is one of the first steps. This streamlined application process will be simpler and quicker for applicants. This process is already underway at OCTS. This streamlined process will include implementing additional, to be determined, measures that will help OCTS submit for Medicaid reimbursement.

Funding Sources: Administrative staff time within existing budget, potential for grant support from Combined Capital Funds; improved Medicaid reimbursement would free up additional funds after implementation.

Implementation Steps:

1. Grant application: Combined Capital Funds for Technology Improvement
2. Implement changes, potentially under purview of Mobility Manager
3. Submit eligible rides for Medicaid reimbursement on an ongoing basis

HIRE A MOBILITY MANAGER

Medium Term

Background: Orange County currently has a Mobility Manager role that is run through the Department of Aging and focuses solely on outreach to older adults and assisting with their transportation. However, Orange County could use a Mobility Manager that covers on-demand services, in addition to the role within the Department of Aging.

Strategy Overview: Create a new Mobility Manager position that has a wider focus, one covering the management of all information and travel training needs for on-demand services. This person would oversee the application process for on-demand services and would be the primary contact for anything on-demand related in Orange County. This role could continue to be funded through 5310 grant funds, but the funds from this grant do not sufficiently cover the cost of an increased role. Other grants could provide the necessary funding to implement this new position.

Funding Sources: NCDOT Mobility Management Funds

Implementation Steps:

1. Grant application: NCDOT Mobility Management Funds
2. Prepare for hiring process so funds can be used immediately upon start of grant
3. Hire for Mobility Manager position
4. Initial projects for the position may include:
 - a. Improve Demand Response trip booking
 - b. Coordinating service provision with DSS and Department of Aging to leverage federal matching funds
 - c. Travel Training program

CONDUCT FARE STUDY

Medium Term

Background: Fare costs vary across agencies and modes in Orange County and can sometimes act as a barrier to transit access. There is interest from the public and key stakeholders to explore the viability of free or reduced fares for the different types of transit services in Orange County.

Strategy Overview: The fare study would cover each individual mode, including fixed route and on-demand. The potentiality for reduced MOD fares will be studied to determine if OCPT could provide the same level of service and continue to make improvements with decreased fare revenue. The viability of fare-free fixed route service will also be studied on a route-by-route basis. With reduced fares, it is important that OCPT will have enough funds to continue future planning efforts.

Funding Sources: 5303 Metropolitan Planning & 5305 Non-Metropolitan Transportation Planning formula funds

Implementation Steps:

1. Apply for pass-through planning funding from NCDOT and MPOs
2. Conduct fare study, including potential funding sources for discount fares and fare-free service
3. Implement fare changes as recommended by study

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Each capital improvement strategy represents a type of capital project with multiple locations recommended for each type. These strategies do not include capital projects that are required for basic operation of the transit service strategies, such as new bus stops for new services. Site locations were prioritized into medium and long term based on the evaluation matrix, inclusion of the projects in other adopted plans, and existing infrastructure at each site. The three types of capital improvement strategies include:

- Bus Stop Improvements
- Rural Transit Hubs
- Walking Access to Transit

BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

Background: Bus stop improvements are an effective way to improve transit experience for riders. Bus stop improvements include various amenities, such as shelters or benches, and can be paired with capital improvement strategies on walking access to transit. Bus stops that have high ridership are often the targets of bus stop improvements since more riders will benefit from the improvements.

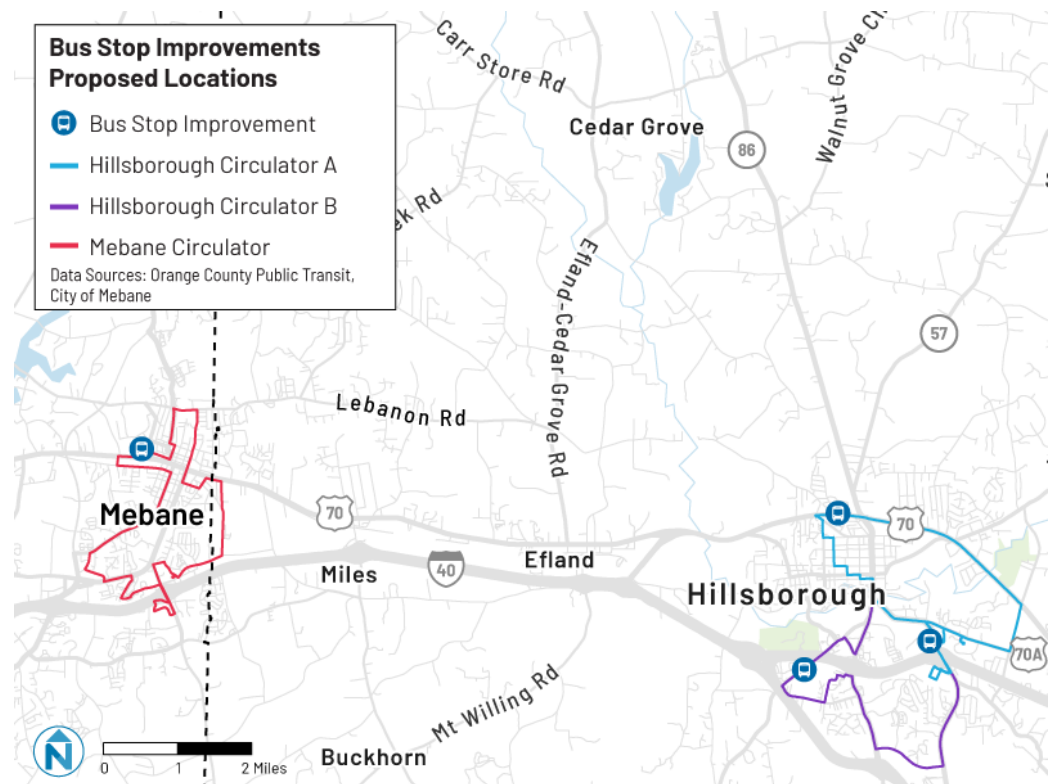
Strategy Overview: Upgrades to existing bus stops, including amenities like a shelter, bench, passenger information, ADA upgrades, or establishing a new physical stop where passengers are currently boarding and alighting without any infrastructure.

Medium Term

- Mebane Community Park
- Cornelius St/Rainey Ave
- Orange Grove Road
- NC 86 Cornerstone Court



Example of Improved Bus Stop



BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS (CONT.)

Funding sources: Formula funds, state funding, federal grants

Amenity	Cost Estimate, FY25 Dollars
Sidewalk	\$2,100
Curb and Gutter upgrades	\$12,150
Bus Stop Signage	\$850
Solar Lighting Kit & Post	\$2,500
ROW Easement Acquisition (Average)	\$11,100
Maps and cases	\$5,725
Trash Can (single bin, concrete mounted)	\$855
Standard Shelter with Bench	\$9,720
Total	\$45,000

*Estimates include engineering costs and contingencies, and are based 2022 Wake Bus Plan capital estimates, adjusted for inflation

Implementation steps:

1. Begin recording and reporting passenger miles travelled to unlock additional formula funding through 5307 Urbanized Area formula funds that can be used for capital improvements
2. Annually submit projects for state plan funding
 - a. NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Funding
 - b. NCDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Funding
3. Apply for TPM Bus and Bus Facility Grant Program for bus stop enhancements where low- and no-emission vehicles are operated

RURAL TRANSIT HUBS

Background: Rural transit hubs are an effective way to improve the transit experience for residents of rural areas who may not have a large stop or transit hub nearby. These transit hubs are intended for low-density areas that are within MOD zones. Residents in rural areas may not be as familiar with transit options, so having a place where additional information can be provided is useful for rider understanding of the system and service options.

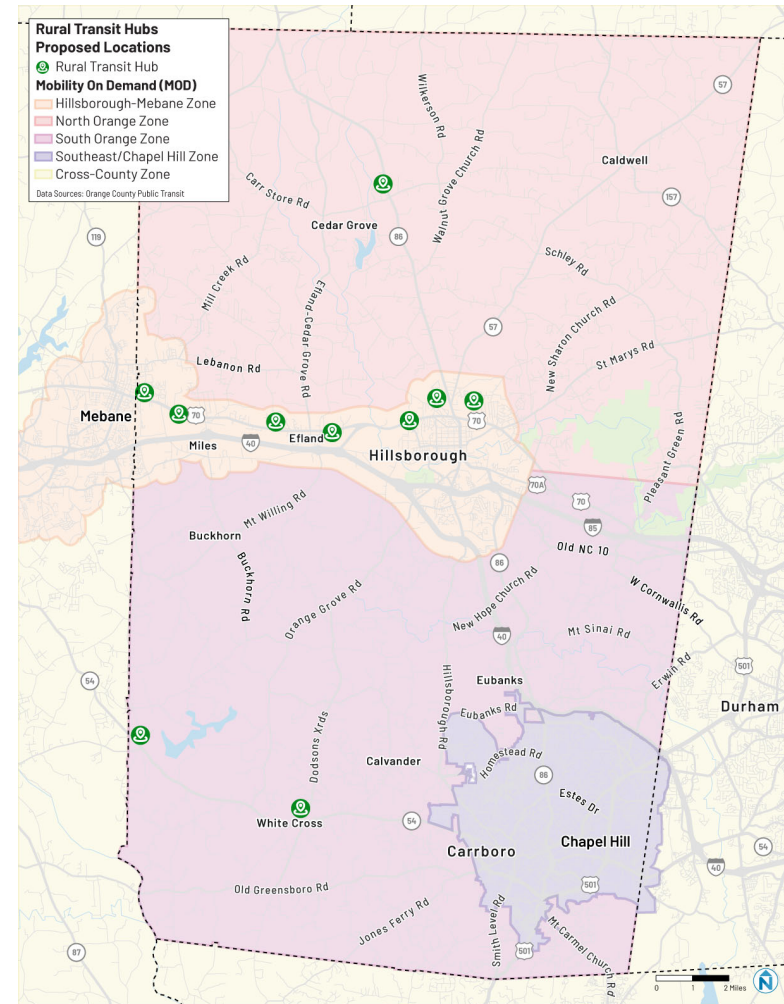
Strategy Overview: Locations in lower-density areas of Orange County with information on booking MOD rides and space to wait. Amenities include bench, shelter, and informational signage. Note that MOD is already available to anyone at any location throughout the OCTS service area, while these Rural Transit Hubs are an additional capital investment to help improve the transit experience.

Medium Term

- Efland-Cheeks Community Center
- NC Driver’s License Office
- Efland Hub
- Supper Club Blvd
- Cedar Grove Community Center

Long Term

- Fairview Park/Dorothy Johnson Community Center
- Mebane Memorial Garden
- Orange High School
- NC 54/Mebane Oaks Road
- White Cross Hub





Example of Rural Transit Hub

RURAL TRANSIT HUBS (CONT.)

Funding sources: Formula funds, state funding, federal grants

Amenity	Cost Estimate, FY25 Dollars
Sidewalk	\$9,225
Curb and Gutter upgrades	\$50,000
ADA curb cut & ramp	\$2,150
Crosswalk pavement markings	\$3,250
Bus Stop Signage	\$850
Solar Lighting Kit & Post	\$2,500
Site survey & design	\$11,100
Maps and cases	\$5,725
Trash Can (single bin, concrete mounted)	\$850
Bike Rack	\$550
Enhanced Shelter with bench, charger, lighting	\$23,800
Total	\$110,000

*Estimates include engineering costs and contingencies, and are based 2022 Wake Bus Plan capital estimates, adjusted for inflation

Implementation steps:

1. Begin recording and reporting passenger miles travelled to unlock additional formula funding through 5307 Urbanized Area formula funds that can be used for capital improvements
2. Annually submit projects for state plan funding
 - a. NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Funding
 - b. NCDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Funding
3. Apply for TPM Bus and Bus Facility Grant Program for bus stop enhancements where low- and no-emission vehicles are operated

WALKING ACCESS TO TRANSIT

Background: For local services, transit riders typically walk between the bus stop and their home or final destination. Unsafe walking conditions can discourage transit use and limit the number of people or jobs accessible within the typical “walking distance” of a transit stop. Improving these walking conditions can help increase transit ridership and improve the safety of those traveling.

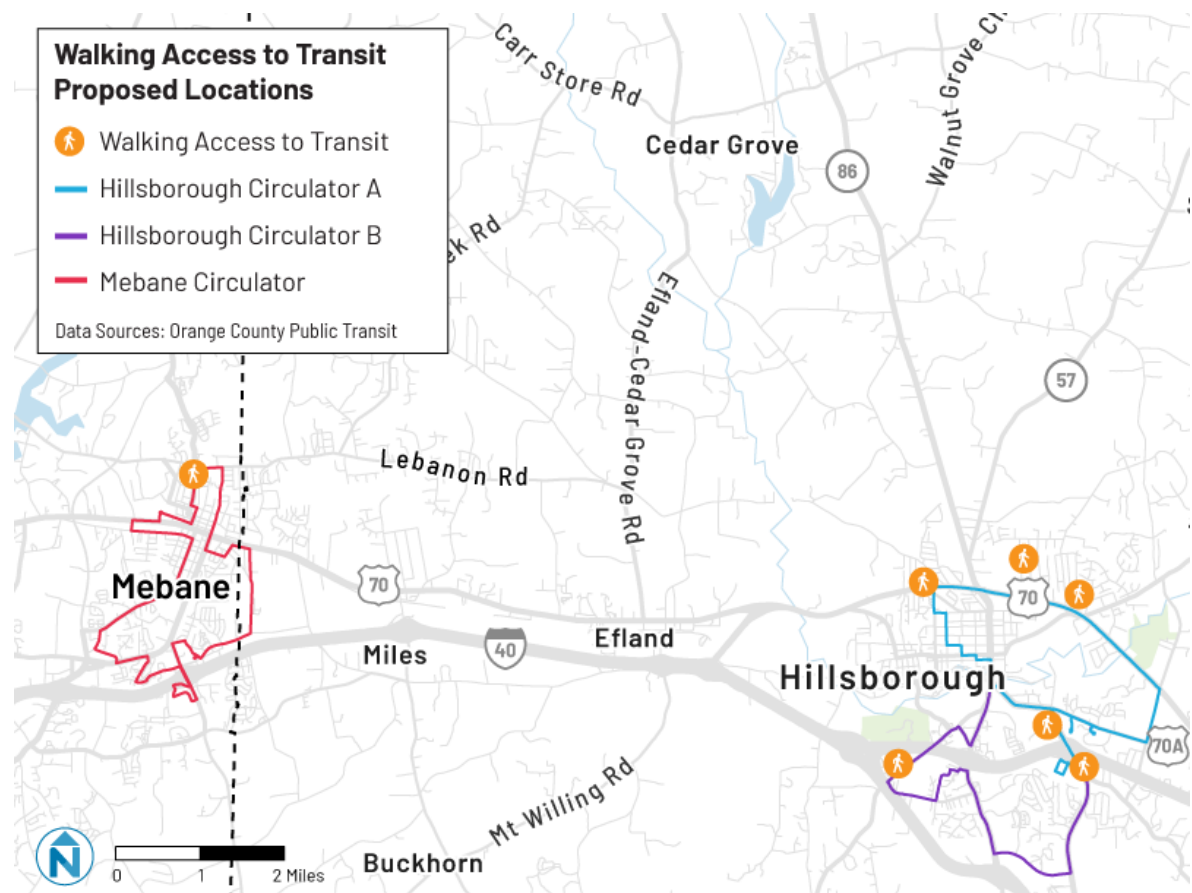
Strategy Overview: Improve access to bus stops with pedestrian improvements such as sidewalks, safe crossings, and ADA upgrades.

Medium Term

- Faucette Mill Road/Cornelius Street
- NC 86 Aldi
- Orange Grove Rd
- Mebane Food Lion
- Orange High School

Long Term

- N Scotswood Blvd (access to US 70/Food Lion stop)
- NC 86 Cornerstone Court



WALKING ACCESS TO TRANSIT (CONT.)

Funding sources: Formula funds, state funding, federal grants

Amenity	Cost Estimate, FY25 Dollars
Sidewalk	\$37,000
Curb and Gutter upgrades	\$200,000
Crosswalk pavement markings	\$3,250
Total	\$240,250

*Estimates include engineering costs and contingencies, and are based 2022 Wake Bus Plan capital estimates, adjusted for inflation

Implementation steps:

1. Begin recording and reporting passenger miles travelled to unlock additional formula funding through 5307 Urbanized Area formula funds that can be used for capital improvements
2. Annually submit projects for state plan funding
 - a. NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Funding
 - b. NCDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Funding
3. Apply for SS4A grants for pedestrian safety projects within the Town of Hillsborough in collaboration with their Safety Action Plan
4. Coordinate with Safe Routes to School and other pedestrian safety plans to prioritize and pool resources where possible, especially for Orange High School location
5. Apply through DCHC MPO for Regional Flexible Funding, a series of federal funds that can be used for access to transit, with the next cycle of funding available for FY28-30