



# CONNECT Beyond

A Regional Mobility Initiative

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Summer is in full swing and CONNECT Beyond has lots to share about what's happening around the region to advance mobility. We are excited to announce that CONNECT Beyond's final plan has been formally **recognized by all North Carolina Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations in our region**. This underscores the importance of collaboration across the region in reaching the shared goal of creating a more connected mobility system. We thank all of our partners for their support and are looking forward to working together.

Several articles and resources in this newsletter highlight the importance of **equity** in all aspects of mobility planning – whether incorporating considerations of equity into mobility investments or ensuring older adults and people with disabilities have all the resources they need to access transportation. We invite you to explore and learn more about this important topic and apply the tools highlighted below in your community.

## Mobility Move Spotlight: Building a Better Bus Network

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Each quarterly CONNECT Beyond newsletter will highlight a specific mobility move, the five categories of recommendations that will transform the way people travel around our region. In this issue we will focus on **Building a Better Bus Network**.



**Buses are the backbone of every transit network** in the nation. Buses can cover vast areas and make new connections between everyday destinations and other transit services much more easily than rail services and at a fraction of the cost. Unlike rail, buses can quickly **respond to changing conditions**, and the CONNECT Beyond region will see many changes in the next 20 years. As new employment centers emerge and the region's population increases, existing bus services can increase service frequency, service hours, and route length and alignment to meet the region's changing transportation needs.

Plan Recommendations for  
Building a Better Bus  
Network

Watch a Short Video to  
Learn More About Building a  
Better Bus Network

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## Featured Article: Creating a More Equitable Mobility System

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As the region worked together in 2020-21 to develop CONNECT Beyond's mobility plan, addressing how to improve **equitable access to transportation** for all of the region's residents was an important consideration throughout the process. One tool developed by the CONNECT Beyond project team sought to better understand key demographic data and spatially map the most transit-dependent areas of the region. The resulting geographic information system (GIS) equity mapping tool can be found [HERE](#) and is a resource for every community in the region evaluating mobility investments.

ESRI, the worldwide leader in geographic information systems, recently published a **case study**, *Driving Toward Equity in Addressing Community Mobility*, about CONNECT Beyond's work related to transit equity and the GIS mapping tool. Find the article [HERE](#).

This work must be **BIG** news because it was also highlighted in the [American Public Transportation Association's \(APTA\)](#) passenger transport magazine in its July 2022 issue.

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## Learning More: Centralina Learns Training Sessions

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Thank you to everyone who joined us for our most recent **Centralina Learns** training sessions, which focused on important mobility topics. In May, transit agency and planners discussed **Mobility Hubs**, followed by a session in June about [Creating Mobility-Friendly Places](#) with a special focus on economic development. Over 60 participants heard from guest speakers representing [CATS](#), [Alta Planning + Design](#), [Renaissance Planning](#), [Centralina](#) and [Gaston Business Association](#). Get ready for upcoming training sessions focused on: *Transportation Demand Management* and *Transportation in a "Post"-Pandemic World*. Registration information will be shared in upcoming newsletters and communications.

Watch the two previous Centralina Learns webinars on our Member Portal under

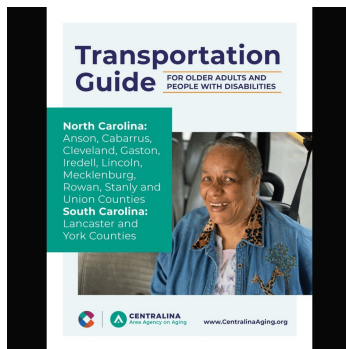
Centralina Learns: Mobility Hubs  
101 - Creating a Successful Hub

Centralina Learns: Creating  
Mobility-Friendly Places

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## Plan Deliverable: Transportation Guide for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

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Older adults and people with disabilities may not be able to drive a personal car but still need access to important resources such as healthcare, healthy food, community support, religious organizations and more. It's critical that communities offer a variety of transportation options to build mobility equity for these situations. To help navigate options, Centralina Regional Council created a two-state Transportation Guide for Older Adults and People with Disabilities that outlines **resources and key considerations** when making transportation decisions.

View the Transportation  
Guide

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## The Latest News Around the Region

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### Centralina Regional Council Receives Grant Award

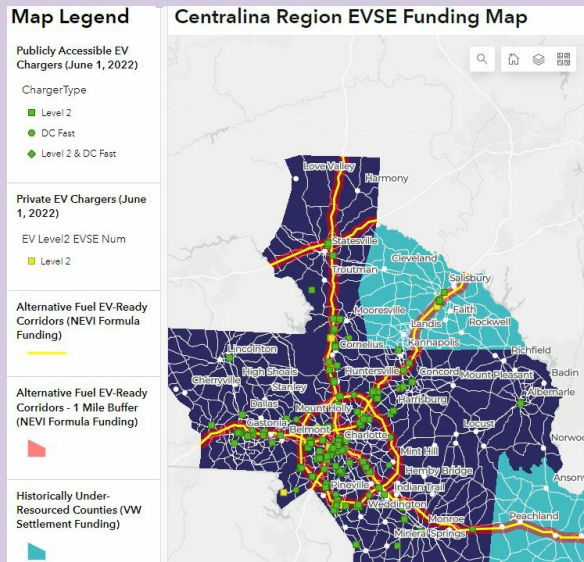
Centralina Regional Council recently received an award from NC Department of Transportation's **Transportation Demand Management (TDM) grant program**. Centralina will use the funds to begin developing a **regional TDM program**, a key CONNECT Beyond recommendation. TDM encompasses a broad set of strategies that seek to change how and when people travel. The goal of TDM is to reduce the number of people driving private vehicles in general, especially during peak travel hours.

### Joint Office Now Offers Technical Assistance for Transit Bus Fleets

The Federal Transit Administration's **Low or No Emission (Low-No)** grant program provides \$5.5 billion over five years (2022-2026) to help modernize bus fleets and bus facilities across the country, including to help transit agencies purchase or lease low- or no- emission vehicles that use advanced technologies. Entities currently receiving Low-No funds or planning to apply for Low-No funds can **contact the Joint Office for technical assistance** to plan for and deploy clean buses. Local agencies can also reach out to **Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition** for more information.

## CATS Receives Federal Transit Authority Grant

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) was awarded a Federal Transit Authority grant under its [Route Planning Restoration Program](#) for a first mile/last mile project that will provide the transit agency with an opportunity to expand frequent and affordable transit service to low-income and disadvantaged communities.



## New Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment Funding Dashboard

[Centralina Clean Fuel Coalition](#) has developed an Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) Funding Dashboard to help local governments better understand current and upcoming EVSE funding opportunities. The dashboard tool, aimed towards local governments, allows users to see on a map what grants and funding sources may be available by location to help fund EVSE infrastructure, including electric charging stations. Building more electric infrastructure is a key CONNECT Beyond recommendation for [Expanding Mobility Choices](#). Find the Dashboard [HERE](#).

## In Closing: Sharing CONNECT Beyond

It is exciting to see all that is happening around the region to support increased mobility and connectivity. Please let us know if you have transit related news to share! Email us at [connect-beyond@centralina.org](mailto:connect-beyond@centralina.org).

And finally, CONNECT Beyond has been selected to present at several upcoming national and state conferences, including [Rail~volution](#), [AMPO](#) and [APA North Carolina's annual conference](#). We are looking forward to sharing our successes and lessons learned with these audiences.

Thank you,

Jason Wager, AICP CEP  
CONNECT Beyond Project Manager

