



CONNECT Beyond

A Regional Mobility Initiative

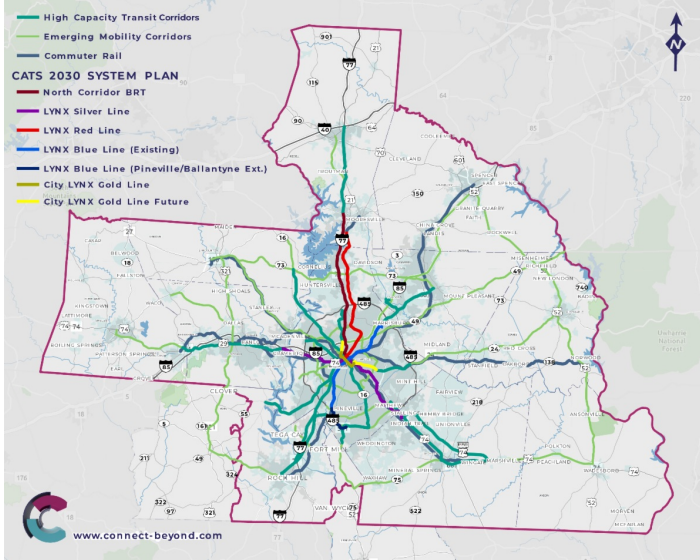
In early 2023, implementation of the CONNECT Beyond Regional Mobility Plan is in full swing. As we get busy in this work it is important to communicate what is happening to our stakeholders who help us to get the word out about project happenings. To this end, please see below for the latest project activities:

- CONNECT Beyond's **Advancing the Plan Committee** held its kick-off meeting on January 27th. The Committee, an official ad-hoc advisory committee of Centralina's Executive Board, was established to steward regional conversation and action that advances the implementation of the CONNECT Beyond Regional Mobility Plan. *See more details about this Committee in the Project Updates section.*
 - The development of a **Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM)** plan is also kicking off with assistance from NCDOT and our selected consultant team from Kittelson & Associates. The TDM plan will lay the framework for a regional TDM program aimed to increase commuter reliance on mobility options such as vanpool, rider share, transit, biking, walking and teleworking. Please be on the lookout for further updates and opportunities to be a part of this plan development process.
 - Centralina completed its **On-Call CONNECT Beyond Implementation Consultant** selection process in December. The team assembled by HDR Engineering was selected for these services and will be involved in many upcoming implementation activities. We welcome back some familiar faces at HDR and look forward to working with new team members as well.
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Mobility Move Spotlight: Strategic Mobility Corridors

Each quarterly CONNECT Beyond newsletter highlights a specific mobility move, the five categories of recommendations that will transform the way people travel around our region. In this newsletter we will focus on the mobility move **Investing in Strategic Mobility Corridors**.

During the plan development process, CONNECT Beyond



identified and evaluated Candidate Corridors along which high-capacity transit lines could be implemented. From this process, 13 High-Capacity Transit Corridors and 24 Emerging Mobility Corridors were recommended (see map above).

High-capacity transit is a form of public transit that offers more passenger capacity and operates at higher speeds with fewer stops than traditional local bus services. Some examples of high-capacity transit include

light rail, bus rapid transit, express buses and commuter rail. A primary purpose of CONNECT Beyond is **to guide our region in developing an integrated regional mobility system** and high-capacity transit lines will serve as the backbone of this system.

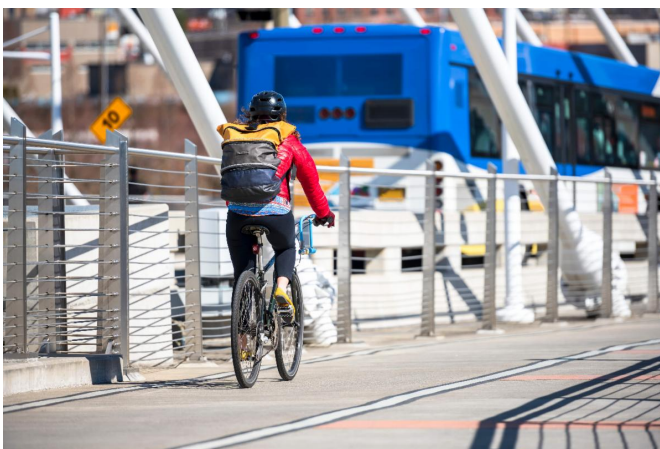
Learn more about the Invest in Strategic Mobility Corridors mobility move:
[Watch our video.](#)

How Will We Get This Done?

Explore Each Specific Corridor Recommendation

See Plan Recommendations for Investing in Strategic Mobility Corridors

Learn More: Importance of First/Last Mile Connections



Key recommendations of CONNECT Beyond's mobility plan are focused on connecting Strategic Mobility Corridors to other modes of transportation. These connection points, or mobility hubs, are critical to getting people to and from work, accessing educational opportunities and assisting travel to medical appointments, shopping, entertainment and recreational activities. The distance between a traveler's origin/destination and a

mobility hub is commonly referred to as the first/last mile. This distance is critical to travelers' use of mobility options and often can be difficult to provide. [CONNECT Beyond recommendations](#) on Mobility Hubs, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Creating Mobility Friendly Places all work together to improve travel between origin and destination points. This is especially important in less urban, more rural areas of the region.

Resources:

Learn what other regions are doing to connect the first/last mile: [American Public Transportation Association](#), [Denver/RTD](#) and [Atlanta Regional Commission](#). In our own region, several transit agencies are evaluating microtransit as a solution to first/last mile connectivity. *For more details see the "In the News" section below.*

The [Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition](#) will be hosting **listening sessions** with key stakeholders on TDM and Mobility Hubs over the next month. Look for an update from these sessions in our next newsletter.

Project Updates

CONNECT Beyond's Advancing the Plan Committee Kick Off



Centralina Regional Council Executive Director Geraldine Gardner with Advancing the Plan Committee Co-Chairs Mayor Darrell Hinnant and Mayor Vi Lyles

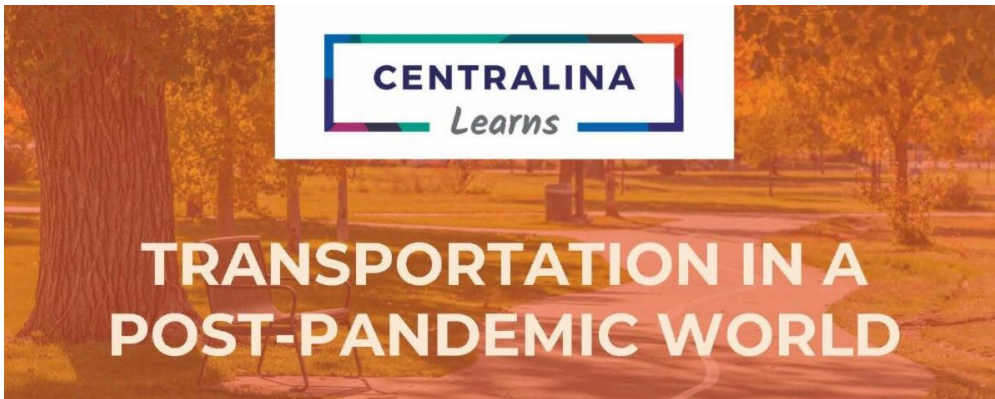
CONNECT Beyond's Advancing the Plan Committee, an official ad-hoc advisory committee of Centralina's Executive Board, was established to steward regional conversation and action that advances the implementation of the CONNECT Beyond Regional Mobility Plan. The Committee convenes elected officials, city and county managers and members of the business community to accomplish three key goals over the next year:

1. (a) **Advise** on short-term opportunities for regional collaboration and (b) **determine feasible options** for a regional mobility governance approach
2. **Endorse** a regional communications framework for CONNECT Beyond and **support** its implementation
3. **Collaborate** to educate state lawmakers on CONNECT Beyond and **advocate** for local funding initiatives in the region

Committee members met for the first time last month and have five additional

meetings scheduled for the remainder of 2023. Members will be focused on identifying near term opportunities for collaboration and next best steps for furthering CONNECT Beyond recommendations.

Upcoming Events



Transportation is integral to our region’s ability to connect people to jobs, enhance upward mobility, increase economic competitiveness and support community centers – all of which improves quality of life for our region’s residents. The COVID-19 pandemic affected our lives in many ways including how, why and when we move and travel. The impacts of these changes in travel behavior have far-reaching implications for future mobility planning, creating a need for flexibility and multi-modal perspectives in transportation planning and decision-making. Join us for the next **Centralina Learns** session on **March 23rd 11:30am-1:00pm** where we will review the impacts of pandemic-related travel behavior and showcase some examples of communities adapting to these changes as they plan for the future.

Register Here

In The News

Microtransit Pilot Programs

Several regional transit agencies are evaluating the use of microtransit, or micromobility, to provide better connectivity to their fixed route systems. Microtransit is a [CONNECT Beyond recommendation](#) for creating transit efficiencies through right-sizing vehicles to trips and leveraging technology and shared trips to focus service where needed the most. The **City of Salisbury** was named a recipient of Rural Surface Transportation [grant funds](#) to help improve transportation for travelers in more rural areas that have difficulty getting to a transit stop. The **City of Gastonia** is also evaluating microtransit and has [issued an RFP](#) for potential service providers. **CATS** is conducting a microtransit pilot study to evaluate the use of on-demand services in the University Area. CATS’ microtransit pilot studies are planned for five zones over the next year.

Mobility for Seniors

Centralina Regional Council is working to better understand **mobility barriers for older adults**, specifically experiences with, and barriers to, using ride share

services. In coordination with Centralina Area Agency on Aging, Centralina is developing educational materials to help older adults navigate newer transportation options. Centralina recently completed a survey with older adults on mobility barriers and plans to incorporate these inputs into outreach materials.

National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Roundtables

The N.C. Department of Transportation is seeking stakeholder input to inform the deployment of the state's [National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure \(NEVI\) program](#). NCDOT recently held a series of roundtables to provide regional forums for capturing valuable feedback on different stakeholder considerations and interests. Feedback from these meetings will be used to develop a request for information (RFI) to be released and will ultimately help inform the creation of NCDOT's request for proposal (RFP) that will be used to implement the program. The **Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition** hosted our region's roundtable on January 30th.

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.

Thank you,

Jason Wager, AICP CEP
CONNECT Beyond Project Manager

