

STAFF REPORT

Apex Transit Prioritization Study

September 23, 2025 Town Council Meeting



Town of Apex staff have been working on the Apex Transit Prioritization Study (ATPS) to identify priorities for local transit improvement and expansion within approximately the next five years. The ATPS report details the study process and final staff recommendations.

The Town Council will hear an overview of the ATPS and will consider acceptance of the work. Note, this is not an adopted Town of Apex plan and, therefore, a public hearing will not be held at this time. If the ATPS is accepted, an amendment to the Town's adopted Transit Plan Map reflecting the proposed routing will be considered at a later date and a public hearing will be held.

The full ATPS report document, along with supporting materials, is available on the project website at: www.publicinput.com/TransitStudy.

Overview

This study is not a full Transit Plan for the Town. Rather, it is meant to set clear priorities to guide transit implementation and investments in the near term. This study is intended to provide:

- Priorities for transit improvement and expansion;
- Recommendations for programming transit investments over the next five years; and
- Recommendations for revisions to the Town's Transit Plan Map.

The study was conducted between January 2024 and September 2025. Funding assistance was provided by the Wake Transit Community Funding Area (CFA) program for survey and outreach support.

Process

The study included four major tasks:

- Task 1: Review existing local and regional transit plans and policies.
- Task 2: Gather public feedback to understand local preferences.
- Task 3: Analyze feedback and other data to develop potential options.
- Task 4: Develop, refine, and finalize recommendations.

Review of Existing Plans

Over a dozen different plans and documents were compiled and reviewed to understand the current transit planning context, as well as ensure any future recommendations are consistent with the local and regional transit vision. The full summary is included as Appendix A to the study report. Overall, there has been a significant amount of transit planning work in Wake County and in the Apex area over the past decade, and Apex community members have been active participants in engagement opportunities.

Some key takeaways include:

- The Wake Transit Plan and investment strategy have brought both funding, as well as greater regional coordination, to transit providers within Wake County, which led not only to the launch of GoApex Route 1 as part of the Community Funding Area (CFA) program, but also improvements to regional routes that provide connections from Apex to Cary, Raleigh, and beyond.

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- The S-line Transit Oriented Development and Mobility Hub projects led by NCDOT identified downtown Apex as a future mobility hub location, which could serve as a multimodal gateway to downtown, as well as a transit transfer point.
- Additionally, over the past several years, the local Apex community has shown support for transit options to connect to regional destinations as well as local service to access jobs, shopping, and recreational opportunities. Downtown Apex is a key destination, and Eva Perry Regional Library appears to be the local destination where access is most desired that is not currently served by GoApex Route 1. Further, residents have expressed a desire for more access from residential areas to connect to key destinations in Town, as well as additional regional connections to places such as Holly Springs, Fuquay-Varina, and Morrisville.

Public Engagement

Public engagement for the ATPS was conducted in two phases and was guided by the Public Engagement and Communications Plan included in Appendix B of the study report. The goals of Phase 1 were to raise awareness about the study, gather input on overall community transit preferences, and better understand the current rider experience. Phase 2 was primarily intended to share and gather feedback on the draft recommendations for new transit routes and other projects.

During Phase 1, an online survey was open to the entire community between March and May 2024, and an onboard survey was conducted with riders of GoApex Route 1 in May 2024. The online survey campaign included robust outreach to raise awareness and encourage the larger community to participate. Staff conducted three in-person tabling events (at Eva Perry Library, Apex EarthFest, and Apex PeakFest) and distributed information through both digital and print media. As a result, the survey garnered a total of 920 participants. The onboard survey was not advertised to the same extent as it was a much more constrained audience, but staff did include a poster on the GoApex bus and added an update to the Town's Transit News and Updates page notifying riders of the onboard survey.

During Phase 2, the community was requested to review and provide online comments on the draft recommendations through an online comment form found on the project webpage between June 26, 2025 and August 3, 2025. The awareness campaign was smaller than the initial online survey campaign and primarily focused on digital messaging. However, staff did also conduct two tabling events (Apex EarthFest and Apex PeakFest) to notify the community of the upcoming request and provided flyers at other Town facilities and events. There were a total of 41 participants who offered thoughtful input on the draft recommendations through the online comment form.

Summary of Public Input

Results from the public surveys and comment form are available in the Public Input Summary in Appendix C of the ATPS report.

Some notable takeaways from the 2024 online survey include the following:

- The most preferred option for improvement/expansion was almost a tie for "Add a new local bus route" and "Increase frequency of service on GoApex Route 1". These were followed by "Complete

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improvements at GoApex bus stops” and “Increase span of service on GoApex Route 1 (nights/Sundays)”.

- The most important local destination was identified as Downtown Apex, followed by retail areas with superstores, and parks.
- The highest-ranked target populations to serve were low-income residents, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- The most important factors “required for me to consider riding” were feeling of safety and security at the bus stop, feeling of safety and security in the vehicle, and safe and convenient walking path to the bus stop and destination.
- Other important ridership likelihood factors were:
 - Reliability/on-time service
 - Short distance from bus stop to home and destination
 - Frequent service (30 minutes or shorter)

Some notable takeaways from the 2024 onboard survey include the following:

- Customer Usage
 - 63% reported that they rode 4 or more days a week
 - 64% reported their usual trip purpose was “work”
 - 65% reported that they did not have a car available
 - 37% reported transferring to GoCary and/or GoTriangle routes
- Demographics
 - 52% reported a household income under \$40,000
 - 13% reported that they have a disability that prevents driving
 - 11% reported using a language other than English at home (and 6 additional customers declined to take the survey due to limited English or Spanish proficiency)
 - 27% reported being age 24 or younger (and several riders were not approached to take the survey as they appeared under age 18)
 - 25% reported being age 59 or older

Additionally, riders ranked weekend service, availability of shelters or seats at bus stops, but running on time, and frequency of service as the most important service characteristics to improve.

Analysis

Staff took the information gathered in the first two main tasks and worked to create, test, and compare different options for transit improvement and expansion that could be feasible for the five-year study timeframe. There were two main considerations for the development and comparison of fixed route concepts: (1) priority areas to serve with transit in Apex, and (2) building logical routes.

To identify priority areas to serve with transit, staff considered:

- Key destinations, as identified through public preferences
- Population and job centers
- Connections to regional transit routes
- Planning context

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To consider whether a route would be logical, staff considered:

- Initial placement of new bus stops
- Route run-time
- Anticipated costs
- Logistical feasibility
- Customer utility

More information about each of these factors is provided in the full report document.

Development of Recommendations

As staff reviewed public input and worked through fixed route options, it became clear that two sets of recommendations would be needed in response to public feedback and emerging transit needs in Apex. Recommendations were compiled into Set 1, which includes recommendations for fixed route transit service improvement and expansion, and Set 2, which includes recommendations for other, non-fixed route service projects and studies to help support public transit in Town.

Staff then requested public feedback on the draft recommendations in summer 2025 before they were finalized. A summary report of the 2025 public comments results is included in the Public Input Summary in Appendix C of the ATPS document. Full results for two key questions from the form are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Results Summary for "Do you agree with the inclusion of the recommendations in Set 1: Fixed Route Service Improvement/Expansion?"

Set 1: Fixed Route Recommendations	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Sum of Agree and Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
1. GoApex Route 1 service expansion/improvements	78%	4%	82%	18%	0%
2. New fixed route between Pine Plaza and Pleasant Park	64%	15%	78%	16%	5%
3. Revise existing GoApex Route 1	60%	22%	82%	15%	4%
4. Implement a new fixed route to Veridea East Village	52%	23%	75%	14%	11%
5. Implement a new fixed route to Lufkin Rd area	21%	43%	64%	23%	13%

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Table 2: Results Summary for "Do you agree with the inclusion of the recommendations in Set 2: Other Recommendations (non-fixed route service, capital projects, and planning projects)?"

Set 2: Other Project Recommendations	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Sum of Agree and Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
1. Continue to support federally-required GoApex Door to Door complementary ADA service	71%	18%	88%	6%	6%
2. Explore options to serve seniors and those with disabilities outside the GoApex Door to Door Service Area.	57%	25%	82%	14%	4%
3. Support Phase 1 of the proposed downtown Mobility Hub	64%	16%	80%	14%	6%
4. Evaluate land use policies for transit-supportive development as part of Peak Plan 2055	72%	12%	84%	8%	8%
5. Investigate Transit Signal Prioritization	52%	36%	88%	8%	4%
6. Explore options to serve others (those who are not seniors or individuals with disabilities) outside the general fixed-route service area.	36%	28%	64%	22%	14%
7. Continue to support improved pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit.	82%	16%	98%	2%	0%

Other comments provided in the form included the following:

- Desire to know more about the finalized routing and bus stop locations for any proposals.
- Concern over costs for expanding services and potential strain on future budget.
- Interest in exploring options for expanding the GoApex Door to Door service for seniors and other non-fixed route transit options like microtransit.

Final Recommendations and Implementation Plan

Staff used the feedback received to finalize the recommendations as shown in Table 3, Figure 1, and Table 5.

Table 3: Summary of Fixed Route Service Recommendations

Priority Order	Fixed Route Service Recommendations
1	Implement GoApex Route 1 expansion and improvements already recommended for funding in FY25 and FY26 (bulleted items may be timed independently): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased frequency Monday-Saturday • Sunday service

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Priority Order	Fixed Route Service Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continuing bus stop improvements
2	Revise the existing GoApex Route 1 routing to provide better access in the following areas (bulleted items may be timed independently): <ul style="list-style-type: none">Access to downtown/Town Hall Campus area in both route directionsChapel Ridge RoadHughes Street/Broadstone Way
3	Implement a new fixed route following the Pine Plaza/Pleasant Park routing concept, with the same frequency and span as approved for GoApex Route 1
4	Implement a new fixed route to serve the Veridea East Village area, timed with the Western Wake Tech campus and mixed-use center development

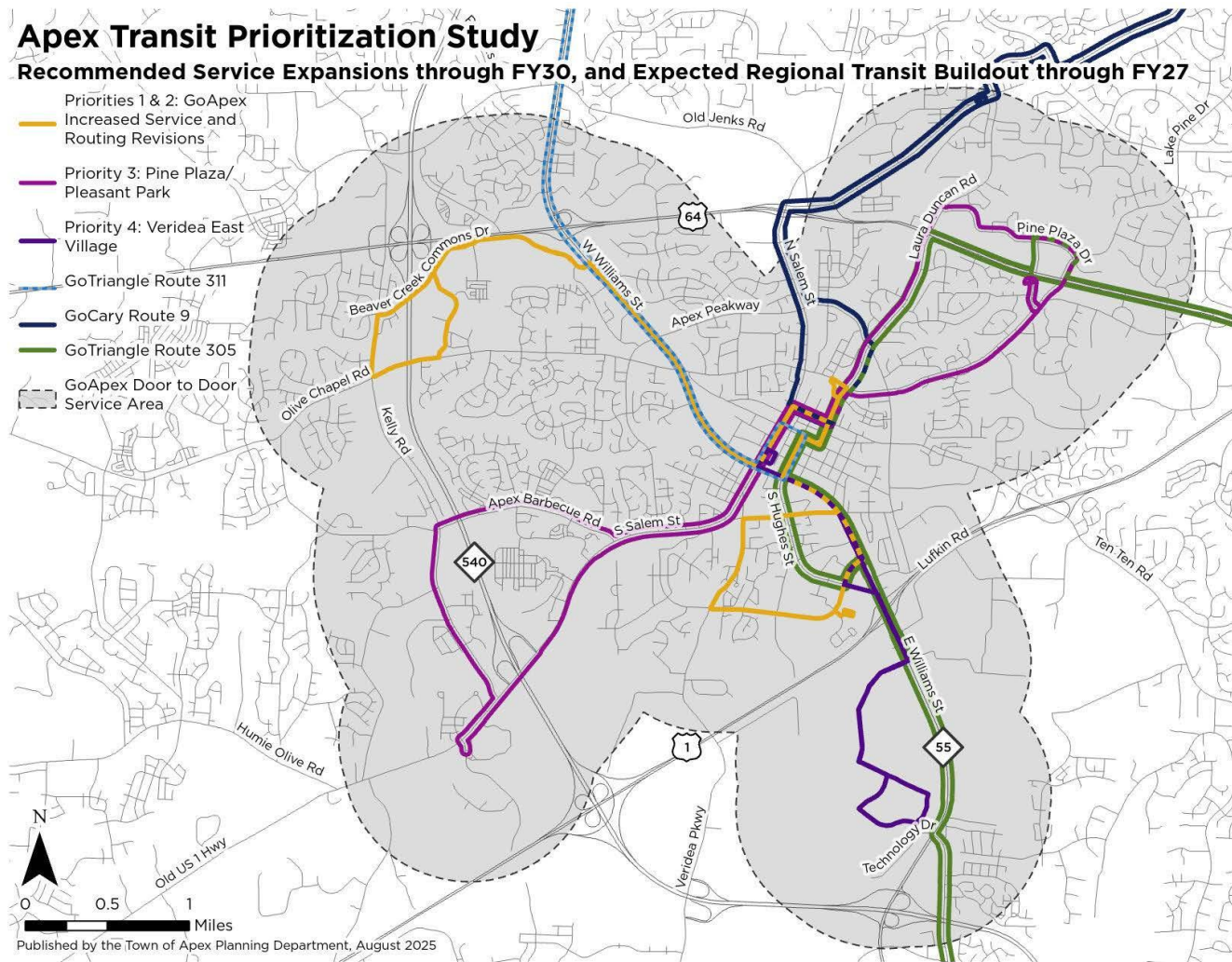


Figure 1. Final Fixed Route Recommendations

Table 3. Summary of Other Recommendations

Priority Order	Other (Non-Fixed Route Service) Recommendations
1	Support Phase 1 of the proposed downtown mobility hub, which would provide a bus transfer area in downtown Apex.
2	Evaluate land use policies for transit-supportive development as part of Peak Plan 2055 - the Town's comprehensive plan update beginning in 2025.
3	Explore options to serve seniors and those with disabilities outside the federally-required GoApex Door to Door Service Area.
4	Continue to support improved pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit.
5	Investigate transit signal prioritization, which would allow buses to travel more efficiently.
6	Explore options to serve others (those who are not seniors or individuals with disabilities) outside the general fixed-route service area.

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Staff also developed a proposed implementation plan through FY30 that addresses the recommendations in priority order. It is provided in the full report. The first task will likely be to bring forward proposed amendments to the Town's Transit Plan Map, which is a part of the Town's comprehensive plan. Further tasks will be to develop funding applications, conduct further service planning to refine fixed route concepts and select future bus stop locations, and coordinate advance planning tasks for the other project recommendations.

Overall, this document should serve as a clear guide to staff on local transit priorities for the next approximately five years. However, these recommendations could be subject to change over time as new priorities are identified or local conditions change, such as through updates to the Town's comprehensive plan. It is staff's intent to keep the community informed and offer additional opportunities for input as service improvement and expansion projects progress.

Planning Board Recommendation:

The Planning Board unanimously recommended acceptance of the Apex Transit Prioritization Study at their September 8, 2025 meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Planning Department staff recommend acceptance of the Apex Transit Prioritization Study.