

Apex Transit Prioritization Study

Summary of Previous Transit-Related Plans and Studies

Part of Task 1: Gather and Analyze Data

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Introduction

This summary document includes a brief overview of relevant transit-related local and regional plans and studies in the past decade, with a focus on gleaning relevant feedback received from public outreach to help inform future recommendations for the Apex Transit Prioritization Study. Table 1, below, shows the name, approving body, year of approval, and geographic area for each included document. A summary of key plan recommendations follows.

Table 1. Documents included in the plan summary

Document Name	Approving Body	Approval Date	Geographic Area
Western Wake Comprehensive Operations Analysis	Cary Town Council	October 2018	Western Wake County
Wake Transit Community Funding Area Program Management Plan	CAMPO Executive Board and GoTriangle Board of Directors	November 2018	Wake County and RTP
Advance Apex: The 2045 Transportation Plan	Apex Town Council	February 2019	Apex Planning Area
Apex Downtown Master Plan & Parking Study	Apex Town Council	December 2019	Apex Planning Area
Apex Circulator Study	Apex Town Council	June 2020	Apex Planning Area
Wake Transit Vision Plan	CAMPO Executive Board and GoTriangle Board of Directors	April 2021	Wake County
Wake Bus Plan - 2023	CAMPO Executive Board and GoTriangle Board of Directors	May 2023	Wake County
GoCary Short Range Transit Plan	CAMPO Executive Board and GoTriangle Board of Directors	May 2023	GoCary Service Area
GoTriangle Short Range Transit Plan	CAMPO Executive Board and GoTriangle Board of Directors	May 2023	GoTriangle Service Area in Wake County
S-Line Transit-Oriented Development Study (NCDOT) – Apex Playbook	NCDOT and Municipal Partners	July 2023	Apex Planning Area
Capitol Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CAMPO CPT-HSTP)	CAMPO Executive Board	September 2024	Raleigh Urbanized Area
Western Big Branch Area Plan: Encompassing Portions of the Friendship and New Hill Communities	Apex Town Council	November 2024	Apex Planning Area - Friendship and New Hill Communities

Plan Summaries

Western Wake Comprehensive Operations Analysis (2018)

The Western Wake Comprehensive Operations analysis was completed in 2018, prior to the launch of the Town of Apex's bus service. This document was created for GoCary by the consulting firm Nelson\Nygaard to "assess the strengths and opportunities of transit service in western Wake County", including the Cary, Apex, and Morrisville areas (pg. 3). The study was initiated by the decline in ridership on GoCary's network between 2014 and 2016 from 300,000 riders to 250,000, despite the increase in population in the area. The study included a transit market analysis and a service analysis, and public outreach was conducted in Cary, Apex, and Morrisville. The report produced recommendations on alignment, schedule, vehicles, bus stops, and operating costs.

Market Analysis Factors

The specific factors considered in the transit market analysis and the findings relevant to the Town of Apex are summarized below.

- Population and population density
 - Population density in Apex was relatively low, with areas of 1-4 and 5-8 people per acre.
 - Of the top five most densely populated locations identified in the study area, none were located in Apex.
- Employment and employment density
 - Job density in the Apex area was mostly concentrated in two key areas, including:
 - Downtown Apex
 - The US 1 and US 64 intersection area to the east of Apex
- Transit Demand
 - The project team created a map (pictured below) based on (uncited) national research on the propensity for transit usage based on socioeconomic data, including race and ethnicity, annual income, and vehicle ownership. The map uses data from 2015 and 2016. Areas shown in red correspond with a projected demand to support service with 15-minute frequency, areas shown in orange projected to support 30-minute frequency, areas shown in yellow to support 60-minute frequency, and areas shown blue to support only demand-response service.



Figure 1: Transit Propensity Map of Apex from the Western Wake Comprehensive Operations Analysis (2018)

- Major activity centers
 - Notable activity centers in Apex that could generate transit demand were:
 - Downtown Apex
 - Apex WakeMed Healthplex
 - Beaver Creek Commons/Crossings
 - Pinnacle Park industrial area
- Travel Flows
 - This section of the report included data on travel patterns.
 - Estimated regional daily commute trips to/from the Apex area:
 - >5,000 trips/day
 - Apex to Raleigh
 - 2,501 – 5,000 trips/day
 - Apex to Cary
 - 1,001 – 2,500 trips/day
 - Apex to Durham
 - Raleigh to Apex
 - Cary to Apex
 - Within Apex
 - 500 – 1,000 trips/day
 - Apex to Chapel Hill
 - Apex to RTP
 - Apex to Morrisville
 - Durham to Apex

- Local Commute Trips – trips within the study area (Apex, Morrisville, and Cary). This metric does not include directionality.
 - 51-100 trips/day
 - Western Apex to/from Morrisville
 - 26-50 trips/day
 - Eastern Apex to/from Morrisville
 - Apex to/from Southwest Cary
 - Apex to/from Crossroads Cary

Results of Public Outreach

Two open houses each were held in Apex, Cary, and Morrisville. 79% of the online survey respondents lived in Apex. Key findings from the survey were:

- Expanding service to new areas was of particularly high priority, specifically in Apex and Morrisville where no local service existed at the time.
- Fixed route service was preferred over demand response service at a rate of two to one.
- Respondents were evenly split on whether they preferred slower service with shorter walking distances to stops, or faster service with longer walking distances to stops.
- More frequent peak-hour service was preferred to an expanded span of service with earlier morning and later evening trips, though only slightly.

Two scenarios were proposed at each meeting. Scenario 1 focused on expanding local fixed route services in the communities of Apex, Morrisville, and Cary; Scenario 2 focused on providing coverage-focused micro-transit service. Respondents who preferred Scenario 1 favored the focused expansion of service in West Cary as well as fixed circulator service in Morrisville and Apex. It was frequently expressed that the predictability of fixed route service was desirable and perceived as more reliable. Respondents who preferred Scenario 2 favored the flexibility of micro-transit service and noted the benefit of covering a larger area.

Wake Transit Community Funding Area Program Management Plan (2018)

The Community Funding Area Program (CFAP) was created as part of the investment strategy approved by Wake County voters branded as the Wake Transit Plan (2017-2027) to fulfill one of the four main goals to “enhance access to transit” (see summary of updated Wake County Transit Plan below). The CFAP leverages tax revenue and local funds to

develop community-based public transportation and make transit supportive investments in Wake County municipalities outside Raleigh and Cary that would otherwise have limited access to fixed-route services. Adopted in November 2018, the Wake Transit Community Funding Area Program Management Plan (CFA-PMP) outlines the eligibility criteria for projects as well as performance metrics for projects that receive funding. This a competitive program.

The Town of Apex is one of eleven eligible entities (ten Wake County towns, plus the RTP Foundation), that are eligible to receive funding from CFAP. For a given project to receive funding from CFAP, it must provide a 50% match for all funds and meet other reporting requirements.

It is noted that Apex is the most active participant in the CFAP, using awarded funds to plan service, operate GoApex Route 1, and improve bus stops and sidewalks near transit.

Advance Apex: The 2045 Transportation Plan (2019)

Advance Apex: The 2045 Transportation Plan (Advance Apex) was adopted in February 2019 to set the Town's multimodal transportation priorities through 2045. The plan establishes a vision for the transportation network in Apex and identifies a set of projects, policies, and actions that will allow for incremental progress toward that vision. Advance Apex included extensive stakeholder engagement. Based on stakeholder feedback, “Mobility and Connectivity” was identified as a key Planning Theme, to: “Create a balanced transportation system that connects people to destinations with a safe, efficient, progressive, and equitable network that accommodates drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users” (p.11). Key takeaways from stakeholder outreach pertaining to transit include:

- Integrate transportation investments and land use decisions
 - “Many residents felt that the Town’s rapid growth had contributed to traffic congestion and safety issues, as transportation improvements failed to keep pace with development. Transportation decisions should be integrated with the land development process in the future to ensure sustainable growth” (p. 9).
- Enhance transit accommodations.
 - “While most in Apex travel by personal vehicle, many future opportunities exist to enhance the community’s local transit system as well as connections to the regional transit network” (p. 10).
- More specific feedback received during focus group discussions is summarized below:

- 25% of respondents in the development focus group meeting said that prioritizing transit facilities and growth is the most important transportation strategy to implement as Apex grows - tied with increasing traffic capacity by widening roads and integrating transportation and land use planning to help people travel without cars and reduce trip lengths. (Appendix A – Outreach Summary, p. A51)
- With such a mixed response, it was determined that a blend of each strategy, as well as implementing Transportation Demand Management (TDM), would be the most appropriate approach to ease the significant strain on the transportation network.
 - Transit was listed as one of three most important elements for retail, office, multifamily, and industrial areas. (Appendix A – Outreach Summary, p. A18-A20)
- The Steering Committee stated that having transit to both Wake Tech and RTP is important and that commercial uses are needed [to support transit]. (Appendix A – Outreach Summary, p. A35)
- The Steering Committee suggested using demographics to inform transit services, including looking at 55+ communities.
- The Steering Committee would like there to be a connection between transit and bike/ped recommendations. (Appendix A – Outreach Summary, p. A35)
- Most participants in the Downtown Focus Group were in favor of supporting transit to and around downtown Apex. (Appendix A – Outreach Summary, p. A75)

Advance Apex sets Context Areas where different transportation elements are encouraged or discouraged to support the desired land use, and vice versa. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) was established as one of those context areas to help guide density, development patterns, and priority areas for transit investment. Although a separate context area, the Town Center was also identified as an area where transit service should be a high priority.

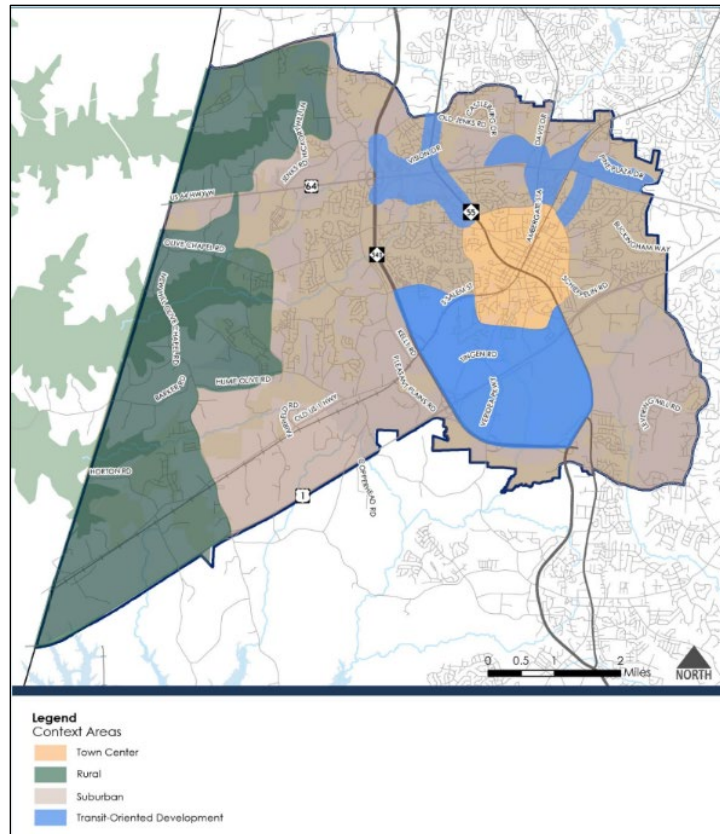


Figure 2: Map from Advance Apex (2019) showing Town Center Context Area in orange and Transit-Oriented Development Context Areas in blue

The Transit Element of the plan is found in Chapter 7. Recommendations include:

- Continue coordination with GoTriangle and GoCary in preparation for regional transit service expansions to Apex.
- Pursue funding through the Wake Transit Community Funding Area Program implement the circulator route recommended in the Western Wake Comprehensive Operations Analysis.
- Support future transit by enabling transit-supportive development near future transit station locations and along future transit corridors. The updated future land use map provides for increased density in many of these areas to support future transit service.
- Implement recommendations from Bike Apex that improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to existing bus stops in preparation for enhanced service.
- Work with GoTriangle and other regional partners to find ways to accommodate the future rail system and preserve rights-of-way.
- Formalize the Town of Apex transit committee and use this group as a formal means to progress toward implementation of the recommended transit projects.

- Continue to review parking requirements in the UDO as transit improvements are made, considering reductions as appropriate within the Transit-Oriented Development context area and possible requirements to provide park and ride spaces near major transit stops.
- Continue to actively engage with TPAC, providing input on regional plans that may impact Apex and ensuring that Apex has a voice in the process.

This plan also establishes the Town's Transit Plan Map which shows potential future transit service and improvements. This map has been updated several times since plan approval. It is noted that the Transit Plan Map does not set defined service plans, rather it shows where service or mobility hubs may be located in the future. The map established the circulator route that would become GoApex Route 1 as the highest-priority local transit service, but did not establish other priorities for local routes.

Apex Downtown Master Plan & Parking Study (2019)

Adopted in December 2019, this plan outlines several recommendations to enhance the Town's historic downtown.

One of the project's stated goals is to "Create Connections to Downtown". Multi-modal connectivity to downtown was identified as a critical element of bringing more people downtown safely.

A top ten priority project included building a mobility hub near NC 55 and Salem Street to serve as an iconic, multi-modal gateway for Downtown.

Multi-modal transportation was the second most popular approach to manage parking in a 130-person public workshop with 25% picking it as their preferred method. Strategies to improve multi-modal transportation relate to other ways of reaching downtown without a car. These strategies may include adding more bicycle racks in conspicuous (well-lit) locations, investigating the potential for a bikeshare program, designating an Uber/Lyft loading zone along Salem Street, or working with regional transit providers (GoTriangle and GoCary) to enhance service near/ through Salem Street and utilizing the future GoApex Route 1 service along NC55/Williams Street. The project team also discussed the potential of a downtown trolley service, but the idea was tabled in favor of other strategies and priorities for managing parking.

Apex Circulator Study (2020)

The Apex Circulator Study was completed in 2020 and outlined the detailed service planning for the route that became GoApex Route 1, which launched in 2022. The document included a summary of public input. Over 500 community members participated in an online survey or at pop-up events around town. The public input served to finalize the routing and operations plan for the route. Some key takeaways from the survey include:

- The only “top ten” destination identified in the survey that is not served by GoApex Route 1 is the Eva Perry Regional Library.
- Other local destination not served by the current route with multiple mentions include the Jenks Rd area, Apex Barbecue Rd, Laura Duncan Rd/64, and Ten Ten Rd/Center St.
- There were also requests for connections to areas outside of Town, including Holly Springs, Fuquay-Varina, Wake Tech south campus, and Morrisville.
- There were some concerns about the level of use of the service and if it would be worth the expense.
- There were multiple requests for 30-minute frequency.

Wake County Transit Plan Update (2021)

This document is an update to the original Wake County Transit Plan that was adopted in 2016. The purpose of this document is to guide transit investment projects funded by a half-cent local sales tax and other revenue sources. The plan is to be updated every four years; accordingly, there will be a new update in 2025.

The four goals, or “Big Moves”, of the Wake County Transit Plan are:

- Big Move 1: Connect Regionally
- Big Move 2: Connect All Wake County Municipalities
- Big Move 3: Frequent, Reliable Urban Mobility
- Big Move 4: Enhanced Access to Transit

Apex is noted as one of the “outer-area towns of Wake County” that saw most of the population growth from 2010-2017 – identifying the town as a viable location for more bus service. Additionally, parts of Apex are expected to have an increased need for transit by 2035, based on projected population and job growth in the region. These changes can be seen in Figures 4 and 5.

In “Big Move 1” Apex is not shown in the 2030 plan as having rail or BRT service, but it is shown as an option for future expansion of commuter rail to Apex.

Town of Apex is one of the communities identified in “Big Move 2” to connect all Wake County municipalities. According to this plan, the GoTriangle Route 305, which provides service from Apex to Raleigh, fulfills that goal. Peak services are provided or planned to and between Apex and other communities and destinations such as Holly Springs, Cary, and RTP as illustrated in Figure 3.

The key takeaway from “Big Move 4” is that Apex is one of the identified Community Funding Areas, eligible to apply for up to a 50 percent match of funding for locally designed transit services.

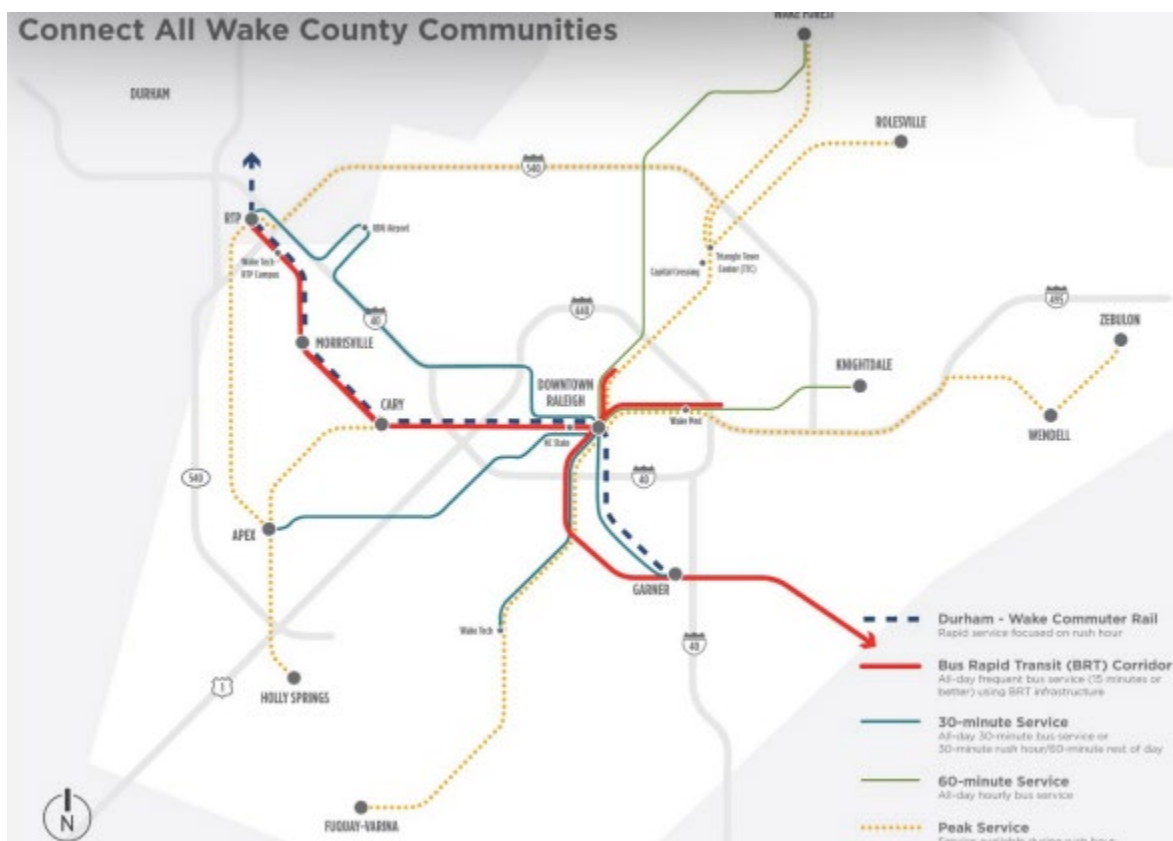


Figure 3: Map from the Wake County Transit Plan (2021) illustrating “Big Move 2: Connect All Wake County Communities”

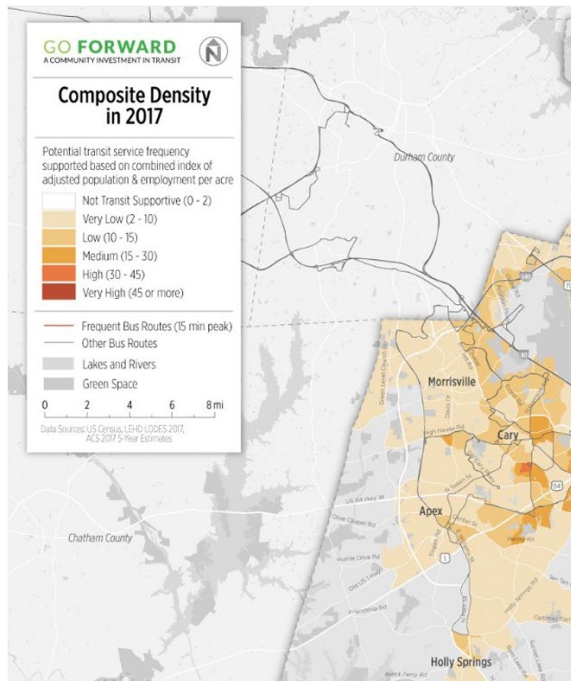


Figure 4: Map from the Wake County Transit Plan (2021) illustrating estimated population and employment density in 2017

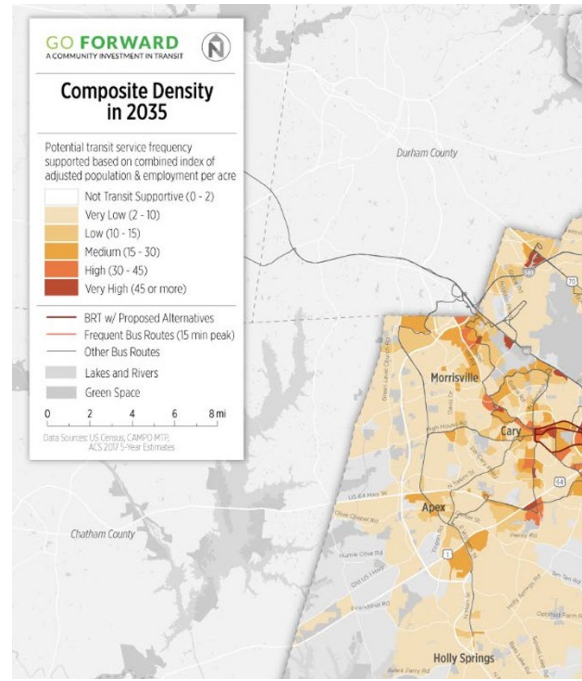


Figure 5: Map from the Wake County Transit Plan (2021) illustrating projected population and employment density in 2035

Wake Bus Plan (2023)

The Wake Bus Plan update, approved in May 2023 replaced the bus plan originally adopted in 2019. This document focuses on bus services and capital projects sponsored by the City of Raleigh (GoRaleigh), GoTriangle, and the Town of Cary (GoCary). The complementary Short Range Transit Plans for each agency follow this plan but add more detail.

Projects funded through the Community Funding Area (CFA) program were not reviewed by the Wake Bus Plan, therefore, GoApex Route 1 is not included in this document. However, several plan recommendations, including improvements to GoTriangle Route 305, the reinstatement of GoTriangle Route 311, and the new GoCary Route 12, would serve Apex.

GoCary Short Range Transit Plan (2023)

The GoCary – FY2025 to FY2027 Short Range Transit Plan follows guidance from the overarching regional Wake Transit Plan and Wake Bus Plan. The document serves as a framework to:

- Guide service investments funded through the Wake Transit Plan (Fiscal Years 2025 - 2027)
- Reflect GoCary goals and objectives in the short-term and align with Wake Transit Plan objectives.
- Identify projects for programming and funding in operating and capital models.
- Engage members of the public to ensure their feedback and needs are included in Wake Transit Plan Funded investments.

Pertaining to Apex, GoCary operates two bus routes – ACX (an express route between Cary and Apex’s downtowns) and GoApex Route 1 (the town circulator, contracted by the Town of Apex). GoApex Route 1 operates in 60-minute frequencies all day, Monday through Saturday, from 6:00am – 10:00 pm. The ACX is runs hourly from 6-8:30am and 4:30-7pm on weekdays with no service on weekends.

The document notes the following takeaways on funding, ridership, and future projects:

- Funding for GoApex Route 1 contract comes from the Community Funding Areas Program and the Town of Apex.
- ACX ridership is continuously low.
- There is an operating project approved for FY25 to convert the ACX from express service to local service and extend the operating hours to daily all-day service that operates on 30-minute intervals on weekdays and on 60-minute intervals on Saturdays.

GoTriangle Short Range Transit Plan (2023)

Published in May 2023, the GoTriangle FY2025 to FY2027 Short Range Transit Plan follows guidance from the overarching regional Wake Transit and Wake Bus Plans. The document serves as a framework to:

- Guide service investments funded through the Wake Transit Plan (Fiscal Years 2025 - 2027)
- Reflect GoTriangle goals and objectives in the short-term and align with Wake Transit Plan objectives.
- Identify projects for programming and funding in operating and capital models.
- Engage members of the public to ensure their feedback and needs are included in Wake Transit Plan Funded investments.

Regarding Apex, Routes 305 and 311 have historically serviced the area. However, Route 311 was suspended in 2020 during the Covid-19 Pandemic and has not been restored. The

remaining Route 305 had the highest operating cost per boarding of the regional routes in 2021 at around \$36.

Among the identified operating projects for the FY25-FY27 planning period, GoTriangle is set to complete a multi-year overhaul of Route 305 in phases. Phase 1 calls for all day service in Apex in FY24. Phase 2, which is slated for FY25, introduces weekend service to Apex at 60-minute frequencies. Phase 3 would improve the connection to Holly Springs, with all trips serving the town on 30-minute peak weekday frequencies and 60-minute off-peak and weekend frequency in FY27. Another project is to reinstate Route 311 between Apex and RTP as an hourly peak-period service in FY 2027.

NCDOT S-Line Transit-Oriented Development Study – Apex Playbook (2023)

Published in July 2023, the S-Line Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Study was created in collaboration with NCDOT, the Town of Apex, and eight other municipal partners. The community playbooks that were produced as part of the study were uniquely tailored to each community's needs to help execute the vision and framework of TOD elements that will support the integration of passenger rail and other multi-modal travel options into the community.

In the analysis of the Town of Apex's previous planning work, the final report found that the Town is well equipped to guide new development towards TOD outcomes. The study identifies two areas adjacent to downtown Apex for transit-oriented development land uses: one near Center Street and North Salem Street, and the other near the intersection of Williams Street and South Salem Street. It is anticipated that these areas would support future passenger rail service, bus service, bicycle and pedestrian connections, and other multi-modal opportunities.

The proposed action plan is separated on the near-, mid-, and long-term recommendations related to land use policies, redevelopment opportunities, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure needs to support TOD.

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan Update (CPT-HSTP) (2024)

Updated and adopted in September 2024, this document is a regional plan that seeks to coordinate transit services with a focus on needs for seniors, people with disabilities, and those with low-incomes, and is a federal requirement for the use of federal 5310 funds

(funding program to improve mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, and those with low incomes). While the plan offers many transit-related recommendations at the regional level, key needs identified include:

- Need #3: There are continued challenges with dialysis transportation due to limited capacity and/or jurisdictional boundaries.
- Need #11: There is a mismatch between the location of affordable housing and available jobs, requiring reliable transportation to job interviews and employment.
- Need #13: There is no direct transportation to medical providers in Orange County (Chapel Hill/Carrboro) from Apex.
- Need #14: Vulnerable populations have safety concerns (due to their personal circumstances) when using public transit.
- Need #19: There is a need for public transit service to the New Hill neighborhood to the west of Apex.
- Need #26: There is a lack of awareness regarding public transportation in the CAMPO region.
- Need #35: ADA paratransit service is expected to become increasingly complicated as service areas expand and overlap.

Information gathered from stakeholder and community engagement in Apex found that there is a call to expand regional service to more rural areas of the county. Additionally, outreach done at a Senior Center pop-up found that residents wanted more transit in the New Hill area.

Western Big Branch Area Plan: Encompassing Portions of the Friendship and New Hill Communities (2024)

Adopted on November 21, 2024, the Western Big Branch Area Plan documents recommended amendments to the Town of Apex 2045 Land Use Map and 2045 Transportation Plan. Much of the plan study area is envisioned to have rural density residential land uses and will likely not support fixed-route transit. However, the plan included a Transportation Recommendation to further explore a potential transit connection between Downtown Apex and Pleasant Park, on the eastern side of the plan area.

Conclusion

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. The Wake Transit Plan and investment strategy have brought opportunities to plan and implement transit projects in Town and led not only to the launch of GoApex Route 1 but also brought improvements to regional routes that provide connections from Apex to Raleigh, Cary, and (eventually) Research Triangle Park. Additionally, there is work to plan a mobility hub near downtown Apex which could serve as a transit connection point to other travel modes as well as a gateway to downtown in the future.

Reviewing these various plans, it appears that when presented with options, the Apex community has for the most part supported the need for fixed-route transit services to connect to regional destinations as well as local service to access jobs, shopping, and recreational opportunities, even if many would not use the service themselves. Downtown Apex appears to be a key destination, and The Eva Perry Regional Library appears to be the local destination where access is most desired that is not currently served by GoApex. Further, there appears to be a desire for additional connections 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.