

STAFF REPORT

Apex S-Line Mobility Hub Plan

May 13, 2025 Town Council Meeting



In 2024, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), in partnership with the Town of Apex, commissioned the Apex S-Line Mobility Hub Plan (Mobility Hub Plan) to examine potential locations for a mobility hub within the Town that could feasibly serve as a future passenger rail station. This report details the process and findings of that feasibility study, building heavily on previous planning efforts related to the S-Line rail corridor, which runs through Downtown Apex.

The Planning Board will hear an overview of the Mobility Hub Plan and formulate a recommendation to Town Council regarding 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 plan is accepted, an amendment to the Town's Transit Plan map reflecting the proposed mobility hub location will be considered at a later date and a public hearing will be held. The Mobility Hub Plan is available on the project website at: www.publicinput.com/ApexHub.

Overview

A mobility hub is a place that brings people together using bikes, cars, transit, and other ways for people to get where they want to go without a private vehicle. It supports connections between regional and local transportation networks. Mobility hubs can transform a transit stop into a destination, providing amenities that serve both transit and the community itself. The S-Line Mobility Hub is intended to be located and designed so that it could feasibly serve passenger rail in the future, but also have utility prior to the availability of passenger rail in Apex.

Passenger rail service is not currently funded for the Town of Apex. Given the Town's growth, the development of Downtown Apex, and the various transportation projects and services being planned and funded in and around downtown Apex; it is important for the Town to develop some specificity around the location and potential design of a mobility hub now, so that the Town can advance the concept through funding requests, grant applications, and coordination with potential future developments and infrastructure investments.

Process

The intentions of the planning process were to:

- Understand the existing and planned future conditions that would affect the location and design of a mobility hub.
- Work with the Town and public to identify the types of mobility hub services and amenities that would best serve the Town.
- Identify a potential location for a mobility hub.
- Develop environmental information consistent with a Documented Categorical Exclusion and Class of Action Checklist relative to the selected location.
- Develop potential mobility hub concepts and document specific design elements relative to the potential mobility hub location.
- Determine a cost estimate and potential funding opportunities for future implementation.

The Apex S-Line Mobility Hub Plan commenced in May of 2024 with a review of existing and in-development planning documents, GIS data, demographic data, and infrastructure projects. In August of 2024 the study team held a first round of public engagement to present the understanding of existing and planned future conditions and to solicit feedback on desired mobility hub elements. After this engagement period the team identified six potential mobility hub locations within the study area, documented conditions specific to each location, and



evaluated each location with respect to a variety of criteria. Based on this evaluation, the study team and the Town selected a preferred mobility hub location. In January 2025, the study team met with property owners that were immediately adjacent to the preferred location to gather their feedback and concerns. After this meeting, the study team developed a series of phased concepts and presented these to the public at an open house in February of 2025. The study team developed cost estimates, potential funding strategies, and the plan report. The study team presented to Town Council in a work session in March, the Town of Apex Planning Board in April, and will present to the Town Council for acceptance in May of 2025.

Mobility Hub Alternatives

To identify potential mobility hub locations, the Project Team evaluated parcel data along the rail corridor and identified groups of parcels (sites) that could potentially be viable for a mobility hub. Factors considered include:

- Ability to accommodate the rail design criteria provided by NCDOT
- Proximity to existing or future planned transit lines
- Proximity to existing or future planned multimodal infrastructure
- Proximity to key community assets such as the Town Hall Campus and Downtown
- Avoidance of parcels included in the National Register Historic District
- Avoidance of parcels with known or potential significant environmental issues
- Parcels that have the potential for development or redevelopment

Based on these criteria, the study team identified six potential candidate locations for a mobility hub, shown in Figure 1:

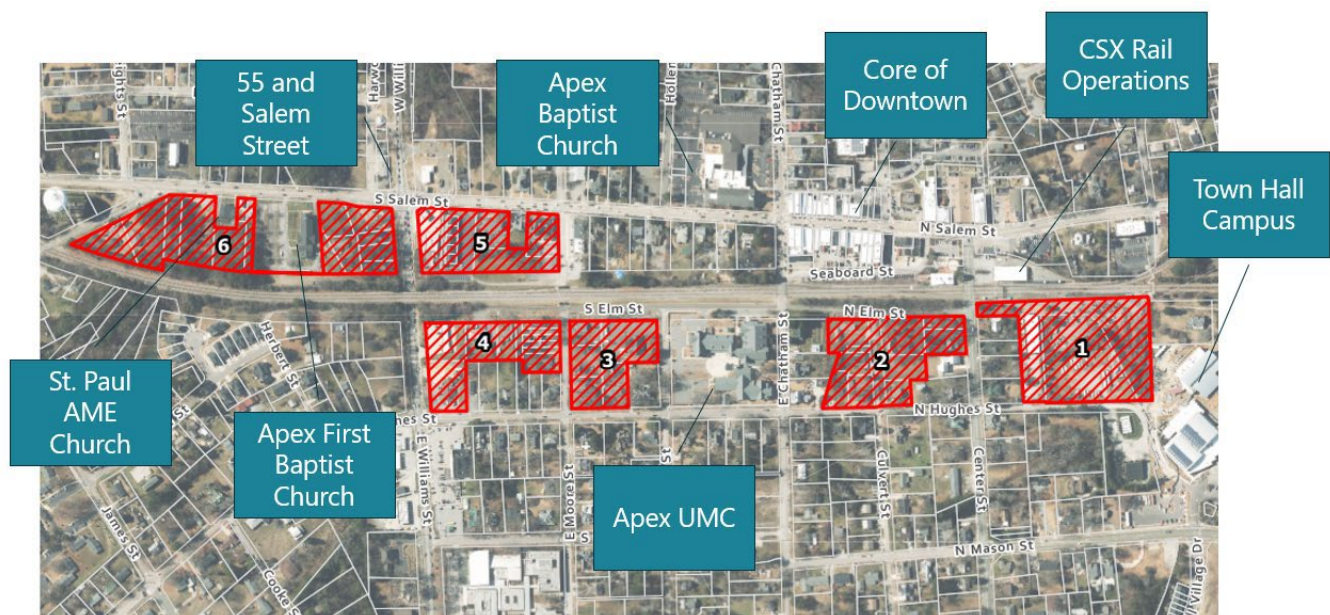


Figure 1. Potential Mobility Hub Locations

Evaluation and Preferred Site

The study team identified six (6) site selection criteria that align with the project goals, feedback from Town staff and the public, and mobility hub best practices and implementation constraints.

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1. **Rail Considerations:** Considers the platform and rail infrastructure (tracks, signals, sidings etc.) necessary to implement a mobility hub at this location and the existing rail infrastructure that would be impacted by a passenger rail station, particularly the preferred platform dimensions. Note that for all sites, further coordination with CSX would be necessary to finalize these considerations.
2. **Crossing Impacts:** Considers the roadways that would be closed during boarding and alighting.
3. **Transportation Connectivity:** Considers the existing and planned future bus, roadway, bicycle, and sidewalk connectivity to the mobility hub site and the ability of users to connect locally and regionally.
4. **Community Connectivity:** Considers proximity and connectivity to the surrounding community including the downtown core, Town Hall campus, and surrounding residential areas.
5. **Future Development Considerations:** Considers the suitability for development of the mobility hub site and surrounding parcels.
6. **NEPA Considerations:** Considers potential impacts to human and natural environment resources, such as threatened species or contributing historical structures.

Each of the six sites was evaluated relative to these criteria and given a high/medium/low ranking. After scoring the different sites using the evaluation criteria detailed above, Site #5: Between Williams Street and Moore Street, West of Tracks evolved into the selected site. Site #5 is consistent with the Downtown Plan, provides direct connectivity to the current downtown core, is connected via pedestrian infrastructure, and would easily integrate with the transit network and service. This site also currently contains an undeveloped parcel, that is located directly adjacent to the CSX railroad right-of-way and the Town's existing parking lot. This parcel is accessible via Moore Street and is immediately adjacent to office and retail uses.

Concept Plans and Costs

After selection of the site, the study team developed detailed concepts for a mobility hub, building on the desired amenities expressed by the public, currently planned transportation facilities adjacent to the site, and the rail operators' criteria summarized by NCDOT.

Due to the uncertain timing of passenger rail service the study team recommends that the construction of the mobility hub be phased, focusing first on elements that supported pedestrian, bicycle, and transit elements, but constructed in a manner that would allow for later construction of the elements necessary to accommodate passenger rail service. This approach also allows for the spreading of capital expenditure over time and allows for flexibility in development of the mobility hub in concert with development of surrounding parcels, which are likely to occur prior to the implementation of passenger rail service. These phases are:

- **Phase 1 – Prior to passenger rail service.** This phase includes improvements to the existing parking lot in the railroad right-of-way and to the existing transit stop along Salem Street, pedestrian improvements along Moore Street, bicycle parking, wayfinding, lighting, a secured restroom for bus operators that could also be opened for special events, and possible EV chargers. During the interim of pending rail service, and with private development coordination through Apex Professional Center, a potential bus layover could be facilitated during Phase 1 along with bus stops internal to the site. This allows the site to serve mobility needs in the short term while establishing the parameters for expanded mobility services.
- **Phase 2 – With passenger rail service.** This phase includes the rail platform on the east side of the railroad tracks (to be confirmed with CSX in the future), additional security measures, café, information/ticketing office, elevated pedestrian crossing of the railroad to access the rail platform, bus

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stop internal to site, and connection to adjacent professional office development to allow for bus circulation.

- Phase 3 – Increases regional pedestrian connectivity by providing a pedestrian structure over Williams Street and a multi-use path connection to the mobility hub. The pedestrian connection is consistent with the S-Line TOD Study recommendations and could connect to the planned bicycle and pedestrian network on the south side of East Williams Street.
- Phase 4 – Extension of Phase 3 but integrated within undetermined future redevelopment of the block as bounded by S. Salem Street, E. Moore Street, S. Elm Street, and S. Williams Street

The table below shows the high-level cost estimate for each identified phase. No cost estimate is included for Phase 4 as there are no planned publicly funded mobility hub changes for that phase.

Table 1. Mobility Hub Cost Estimates by Proposed Phase

Phase Details ⁵	Cost Estimate
Phase 1 Total	\$ 1,145,000
Phase 2 Total	\$ 8,040,000
Phase 3 Total	\$ 4,270,000
Total Cost	\$ 13,455,000

The report concludes with recommendations of possible sources for funding future design phases and construction of the mobility hub.

Planning Board recommendation:

The Planning Board unanimously recommended acceptance of the Apex S-Line Mobility Hub Plan at their April 14, 2025 meeting.

Planning staff recommendation:

Planning staff recommend that the Town Council accept the Apex S-Line Mobility Hub Plan.