

MEMORANDUM

TO: GoTriangle Board
FROM: Planning and Capital Development
DATE: April 21, 2021
SUBJECT: **Adopt Regional Transit Center (RTC) Relocation Strategy**

Strategic Objective or Initiative Supported:

- 1.2 Pursue service improvements and expansion opportunities

Action Requested

Staff requests that the Board adopt the Regional Transit Center relocation strategy.

Relocation Strategy

Staff recommend the adoption of a relocation strategy for the Regional Transit Center, inclusive of the following:

- Preferred location: Intersection of NC 54 and the NCRB railroad tracks. This location is intended to facilitate convenient first- and last- mile transit connections between the bus network, Bus Rapid Transit, Triangle Bikeway, Greater Triangle Commuter Rail, and Research Triangle Park.
- Conceptual Program: Transit center with covered platform for fixed-route buses, separate covered platform for para-transit and microtransit, enhanced passenger amenities, park-and-ride spaces, and a footprint for a future development adjacent to the site which could accommodate GoTriangle administrative space, among other uses.
- Implementation approach: Initiate design and implementation activities for the transit center. Commit local share of design, and acquisition, and construction costs in the FY22 county transit plan annual workplans. Continue to evaluate the relocation of GoTriangle administrative offices to the new Regional Transit Center in coordination with project design as well as the Regional Fleet and Facilities study.

The Planning and Legislative Committee unanimously recommended that the Board adopt the relocation strategy at its January 27, 2021 meeting.

Background and Purpose

The GoTriangle Strategic Plan and the county transit plans for Wake, Durham, and Orange counties identify the need for the relocation of the Regional Transit Center to improve route efficiency, connect to planned capital investments, and improve passenger amenities. The Regional Transit Center serves as a hub and park-and-ride for ten bus routes that directly serve Raleigh, Durham, Research Triangle Park, Chapel Hill, Cary, Apex, Morrisville, and RDU Airport. Nearly 1,000 passengers board a bus at the Regional Transit Center each weekday. At its October 23, 2019 meeting, the GoTriangle Board of Trustees authorized consulting services to complete a feasibility study to identify and evaluate potential sites and produce conceptual site plans for a relocated facility. The Planning and Legislative Committee received an update on the study progress and provided direction to staff at its October 28, 2020 meeting.

Over the past year, the consultant and GoTriangle staff have completed an existing conditions assessment, identified site operational and location criteria, conducted public and stakeholder engagement, performed a site search, and evaluated six final candidate sites. Three sites, “HUB RTP”, located at the northwest corner of Davis Drive and NC 54; “Park Point”, located at the northwest corner of the existing railroad tracks and NC 54; and “Triangle Metro Center,” located at the southwest corner of the existing railroad tracks and NC 54, scored the highest among final candidates. The sites were scored based on improved access to the freeway network, proximity to planned bus rapid transit and commuter rail, access to employment, ease of site acquisition and construction, and the potential for transit-oriented development as well as access to existing retail and services.

At its October 28, 2020 meeting, The Planning and Legislative Committee expressed a strong preference for a site that provides a direct connection to the planned commuter rail station, expressed support for integrating the transit center within a transit-supportive development, and requested that staff further evaluate the “Triangle Metro Center” site at the southwest quadrant of NC 54 and the NCR tracks. “Triangle Metro Center” was a planned station location from the legacy regional rail project in the early 2000s. Following the meeting, staff undertook further evaluation of the three final sites, including coordination with the respective owners of each site, to assess the following: viability of public-private partnership, potential timing, real-estate needs, site access, potential risks, and cost. The results of the further evaluation confirmed that the “Park Point” and “Triangle Metro Center” sites remain the highest scoring sites, based on the technical criteria and that relocation to either site would be viable. The “Park Point” and “Hub RTP” sites additionally present an opportunity for public-private partnership. The proposed conceptual program has a cost estimate range \$25-30 million, in inflated year of expenditure dollars. This range can be adjusted by adding or removing elements included in the program. Vertically integrating the program into a development could add \$10 million to the cost for ventilation and a load-bearing structure above the transit center.



Next Steps

Once the GoTriangle Board adopts the relocation strategy, staff would proceed with design and implementation efforts, including the following:

- Initiate site and facility design, including continued coordination with the commuter rail study as well as coordination with the bus rapid transit extension major investment study
- Develop a grant strategy, apply for federal grants, and secure local funding
- Continued coordination with the property owner and evaluation of public-private partnership opportunities, including the potential relocation of administrative space
- Coordination with the soon-to-be-underway Regional Fleet and Facilities Study
- Completing environmental review, including adoption of a locally preferred alternative
- Continued stakeholder coordination and public engagement

Project Need

The Regional Transit Center opened on Slater Road in December of 2008, adjacent to the Plaza office building that GoTriangle had recently purchased. It has always been envisioned as a temporary facility until a permanent transit center could be located and constructed. As GoTriangle grew service and ridership over the intervening years, the increased usage of the Regional Transit Center has highlighted its limitations. Onsite, buses mix with other traffic, creating conflict points with other buses, vehicles picking up or dropping off passengers, drivers accessing the park-and-ride and adjacent properties, and pedestrians. Overhead high-voltage electrical lines prevent the installation of improved passenger amenities such as more substantial overhead canopies to protect riders from the elements.

The distance of the Regional Transit Center from I-40 and NC-147 necessitates the overlap of several bus routes along I-40 and Slater Road, resulting in duplicative routing and added time and operating cost to travel to and from I-40. The current site lacks a signalized entrance and buses experience significant delays entering and exiting the Regional Transit Center driveway as well as delay at nearby intersections during peak periods. As Imperial Center, Perimeter Park, and surrounding areas continue to add office space and traffic grows, the time and operating cost of serving the current facility will also continue to increase. Finally, the current location of the Regional Transit Center is not proximate to planned investments in bus rapid transit along NC 54 or commuter rail. Relocation to a new location is necessary to address the onsite and offsite limitations of the current Regional Transit Center.

Financial Impact

Adoption of this strategy has no financial impact. Local share for project implementation is anticipated to be split between the county transit plans in Wake (70%), Durham (20%) and Orange (10%). Funding is included in the draft Wake and Durham workplans for FY22 and included for future consideration in Orange, which would commit 90% of the local share to support pursuit of federal grant opportunities such as RAISE.



Attachments

- Draft Presentation
- Draft RTC Relocation Feasibility Study Summary Report

Staff Contact(s)

- Jay Heikes, Senior Transportation Planner, 919-314-8741, jheikes@gotriangle.org
- Meg Scully, Manager of Planning and Transit-Oriented Development, 919-485-7455, mscully@gotriangle.org
- Katharine Eggleston, CDO, 919-485-7564, keggleston@gotriangle.org



PO Box 13787
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
P: 919.485.7510 | F: 919.485.7547

www.gotriangle.org