



# CONNECT Beyond

A Regional Mobility Initiative

CONNECT Beyond is a two-state, 12 county regional mobility initiative conducted by the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to create a unified regional transit vision and plan.

Our region is growing fast. Access to reliable, efficient and well-connected transportation options is one of the most important factors to ensure everyone can benefit. We need to find solutions to promote and harness economic growth, while helping our neighbors and visitors easily get where they want and need to go. This will require collaboration, insight, creativity and a bold vision.

We aim to provide our partners with innovative solutions that will enhance mobility and access.

For more information, contact our project team at: [contact@connect-beyond.com](mailto:contact@connect-beyond.com)



## CONNECT Beyond will...

### DEFINE

a single coordinated regional transit vision

### IDENTIFY

regional high capacity transit corridors

### STRATEGIZE

multimodal and regional coordination

### DEVELOP

action-oriented implementation approaches that support:

- Improved mobility and access
- Regionally coordinated transit investments
- Coordinated transit operations for our growing and changing region and population



# Project Study Area

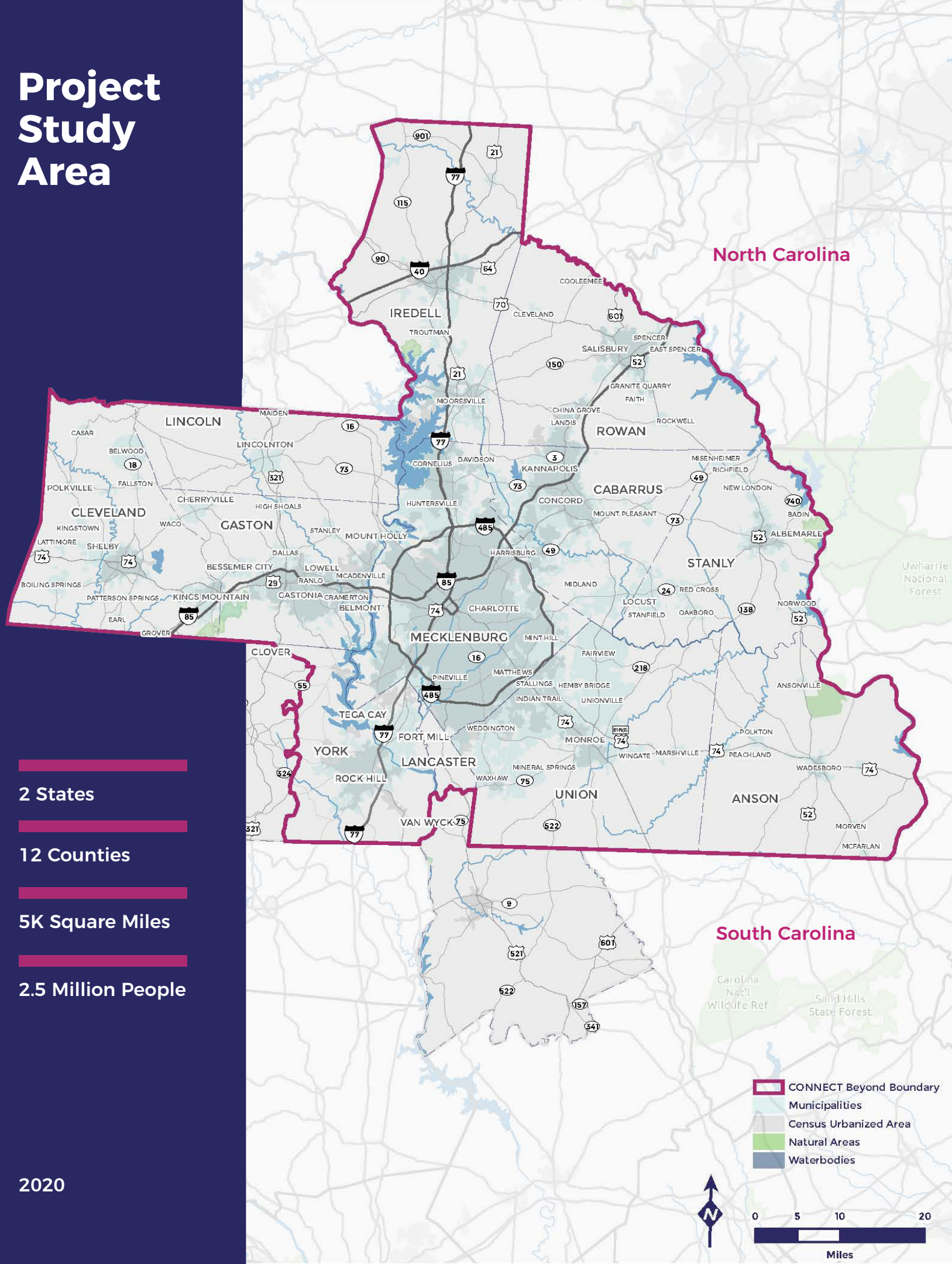
2 States

12 Counties

5K Square Miles

2.5 Million People

2020



North Carolina

South Carolina

- CONNECT Beyond Boundary
- Municipalities
- Census Urbanized Area
- Natural Areas
- Waterbodies



0 5 10 20  
Miles

# Funding Project Partners

CCOG	Centralina Council of Governments
MTC	Metropolitan Transportation Commission
CATS	Charlotte Area Transit System
NCDOT	North Carolina Department of Transportation
CRTPO	Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization
GCLMPO	Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization
RFATS	Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study
CRMPO	Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization
SCDOT	South Carolina Department of Transportation



## Project Team

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CONNECT Beyond Project Manager  
Centralina Council of Governments



**Michelle E. Nance**,AICP  
Planning Director  
Centralina Council of Governments



**Jason Lawrence**  
Senior Transportation Planner  
Charlotte Area Transit System



**Bob Cook**,AICP  
Assistant Planning Director  
Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization



## Advisory Committees

Our project partners and stakeholders will be an integral part of defining the future of mobility for our region. We’ve invited stakeholders from across our project study area to join advisory committees that will focus on developing key elements of this plan, including major policy decisions, community impacts and technical feasibility. We will also be launching a transit academy to educate, involve and empower civic leaders and community members to spread the word about the importance of a regional transit system, the transit vision and how to implement.

**Community**

Key regional influencers. Engagement via government, health & human services, economic development, employers, social services, and education.

**Policy**

Elected officials and policy experts from across the region (NC and SC).

**Technical**

Staff level technical resources. Land use, transportation, health, economic development, education, etc.

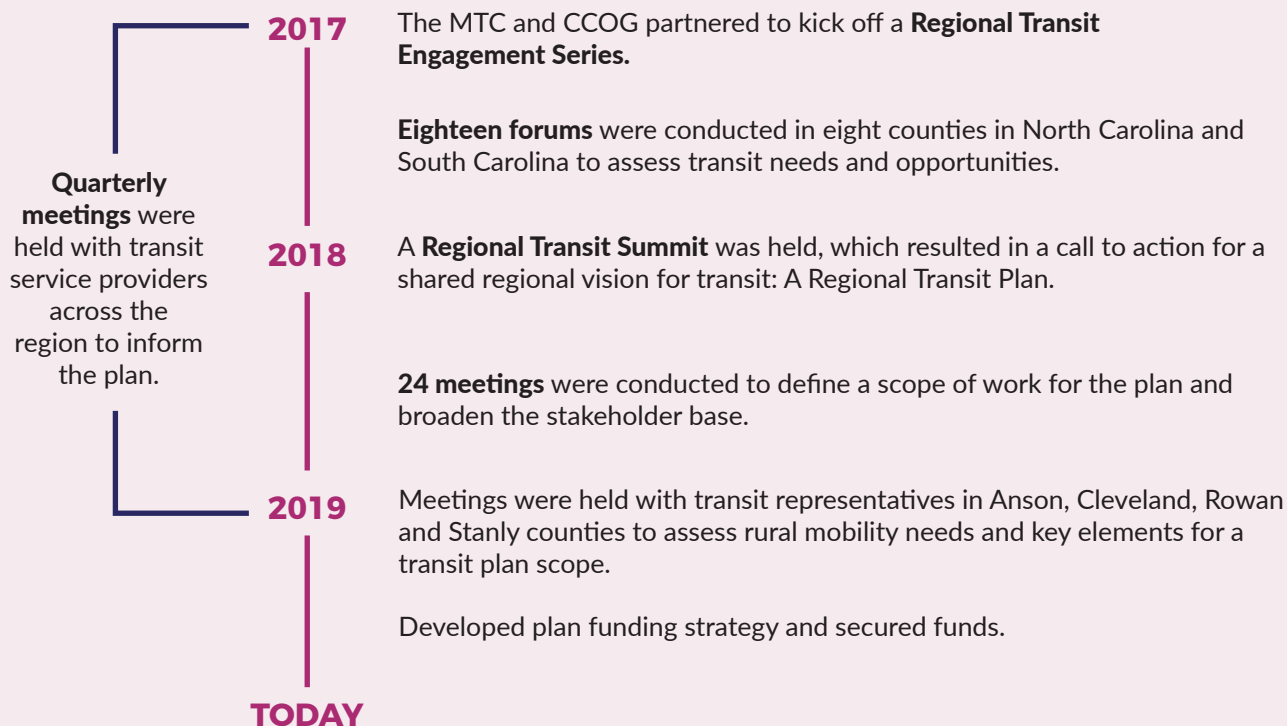
**CONNECT Beyond Transit Academy**

“Deeper dive” forum for committee members, civic leaders and community members.

# Activities To Date



In both the region's growth strategy, **CONNECT Our Future** led by CCOG, and the region's economic strategy, **Prosperity for Greater Charlotte** led by residents, business leaders and non-profit organizations identified a regional transit system that offers local transportation choice as a top priority. The Regional Transit Engagement Series coordinated by CCOG and MTC created energy around this project and developed regional consensus on mobility challenges and opportunities. Coordinated, reliable transportation options provide access to jobs, education, medical facilities and services, and serve as a foundation for our region's continued economic competitiveness and quality of life.



## CONNECT Beyond Next Steps





# Key Messages

Updated May 2020

## Elevator Speech

*"CONNECT Beyond is our region's effort to coordinate and expand local public transportation options to improve mobility for our residents and visitors.*

*We are working with project partners across two states and 12 counties to develop a unified regional transit vision and plan that provides real solutions to our region's mobility challenges and opportunities.*

*In the end, reliable transportation options will provide access to jobs, education, medical facilities and services, and serve as the foundation to our region's continued economic competitiveness and quality of life."*

## Project Overview

### A Regional Mobility Initiative

Our region is growing fast. The immense growth and development our region is experiencing raises important questions about the future of mobility, accessibility, and connectivity across our region. Right now we have an opportunity to proactively shape our region's transportation future and by implementing innovative, bold transportation solutions that will help drive continued economic growth, enhance livability, promote regional mobility, ensure sustainable regional growth patterns, and improve equitable accessibility.

CONNECT Beyond is a two-state, 12 county regional mobility initiative conducted by the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). With the collaboration of municipal and county governments, regional planning organizations, and various transit agencies, our aim is to create a long-term strategic regional transit plan that will include a transit vision along with implementation strategies that our project partners can use to guide their own individual planning efforts and capital investment projects.



## Project Goals

### CONNECT Beyond will...

- **Define** a single, coordinated transit vision for the project study area that includes multiple transit modes.
- **Identify** high capacity transit corridors that build upon and complement the Charlotte Area Transit System 2030 Plan and other regional and local transportation plans.
- **Strategize** on key topics and methods for regional coordination that cross modes of transit as well as organizational and geographic boundaries.
- **Develop** action-oriented implementation strategies that support:
  - Improved mobility and access
  - Regionally coordinated transit investments
  - Coordinated transit operations to meet the needs of a growing and changing region and population

## Project Study Area

The CONNECT Beyond region covers two states, 12 counties, 5,000 square miles and is home to 2.5 million people. This area includes four metropolitan planning organizations, one rural planning organization, close to 20 transit systems, includes both fixed route and demand response systems and numerous private operators, non-profit transportation services and commuter rail.

The project study area includes Anson County, Cabarrus County, Cleveland County, Gaston County, Iredell County, Lincoln County, Mecklenburg County, Rowan County, Stanly County, and Union County in North Carolina and Lancaster County and York County in South Carolina.

This area is made up of rural counties with small towns, suburban counties with regional cities, and an urban hub – the City of Charlotte. Each of these different geography types has unique transportation challenges and needs.

## Mobility is Resiliency

Our residents need access to grocery stores, pharmacies, healthcare services and work. We owe it to our region to keep the CONNECT Beyond initiative as a top priority, finding new solutions that promote equitable economic development while helping our neighbors and visitors easily get where they want and need to go.

## Why it Matters: Project Priorities

Our region of 2.5 million is expected to add 1.8 million more people by 2050. Over the next two decades, the Charlotte region and the Triangle are expected to receive two-thirds of North Carolina's growth. In the upstate of South Carolina, York and Lancaster counties have the highest growth rates in the region. And this new population, whether young professionals or seniors will have specific transportation needs and expectations.

As our region continues to grow, access to reliable, efficient and well-connected transportation options is one of the most important factors to ensure everyone can benefit. We need to find solutions to promote and harness economic growth while helping our neighbors and visitors easily get where they want and need to go. This will require collaboration, insight, creativity and a bold vision.

### Project Priorities

#### **We want to:**

- Improve Transportation Choices
- Enhance Public Transit
- Foster Vibrant Communities
- Promote Sustainable Regional Growth
- Increase Pedestrian Accommodations
- Address Equity Issues
- Encourage Environmental Stewardship

## Making it Happen: Project Process

The process is intended to place over 18 months beginning in March 2020. During this time we will:

- Evaluate Existing Transit Systems
- Make Recommendations for Potential Rapid Transit Lines
- Analyze Opportunities for Commuter Rail Operation
- Strategize Ways to Better Coordinate Regional Bus Services
- Develop a Transportation Demand Management Plan for Our Region
- Document Transit-Oriented Development Strategies
- Consider Ways to Improve Connections Between Urban and Rural Transit Services



## Educated & Engaged Stakeholders

Throughout the CONNECT Beyond initiative, we will:

- Solicit significant input from regional stakeholders, local communities, the public and agencies to ensure the needs of every rider are addressed.
- Educate the public about the benefits of public transportation, the current transit services that are offered in our region, and our regional transit vision to reimagine transportation in our region.
- Explain the importance of embracing sustainable regional development by encouraging development in existing communities and supporting transit-oriented development to help foster more vibrant, walkable communities built around public transit stations.

## How We Got Here: Project History

We have been working with the region for several years to reach this point. The CONNECT Beyond initiative will build on the priorities our communities established in previous engagement efforts.

Prior to launching CONNECT Beyond, CCOG led two complementary regional visioning and planning initiatives: the CONNECT Our Future project and the Regional Transit Engagement Series (RTES).

**CONNECT Our Future** was a regional planning initiative to guide the future growth and development of the greater Charlotte region. This three-year planning process included 14 counties from both North Carolina and South Carolina and engaged 120 local governments and over 8,400 public stakeholders. The central outcome of the CONNECT Our Future project was the establishment of a Regional Growth Framework that will help guide the future growth of the greater Charlotte region over the next 30 years. The project enhanced understanding of area residents' and leaders' perspectives about how our region should grow and develop.

Following the conclusion of the CONNECT Our Future project, CCOG partnered with the MTC to lead a two-year community engagement process called the **Regional Transit Engagement Series**.

From 2017 to 2019, the RTES process included engagement events that involved a wide variety of stakeholders, including federal, state and local government elected officials and staff, transit





agency staff, economic development professionals, representatives from major healthcare and academic institutions, major employers, and land use and transportation planners. From this engagement series, CCOG learned more about local transit-related needs, barriers, and opportunities, how local communities could benefit from additional coordination, and what elements from a regional transit plan would be most beneficial to their community.

**CONNECT Beyond**  
Regional Mobility Initiative

CONNECT Beyond will coordinate with existing active planning and design efforts throughout the region. CONNECT Beyond will evaluate high capacity transit extensions such as light rail, bus rapid transit, and commuter rail corridors. The initiative will also evaluate fixed route bus service expansions, effective human service transportation connections, identify regional connection points, and areas for increased coordination.

Active regional planning and design efforts where coordination will occur:

**Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTP)**

An MTP is a Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (MPO) federally-mandated fiscally constrained long-range plan. The MTPs outline policies, programs and identify projects and project funding over a 20-year period. As the region’s guiding transportation planning documents, the MTPs will inform and be informed by CONNECT Beyond for future years. For more information visit your area’s MPO websites.

**Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP)**

The CTP is the long-range, fiscally unconstrained vision plan for MPOs and Rural Planning Organizations (RPO) in the region; our study areas includes four MPOs and one RPO. Similar to the MTPs, the CTPs will inform and be informed by CONNECT Beyond for future years. For more information visit your area’s MPO and RPO websites.

**Beyond 77**

Beyond 77 is an initiative focused on improving the user experience surrounding the I-77 corridor, approximately three to five miles on either side of I-77, from Statesville in North Carolina to Rock Hill in South Carolina. The Beyond 77 study will create a master planning document of transportation options for the corridor, its recommendations will influence the region’s various CTPs, MTPs and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP). The Beyond 77 study mostly lies within the CONNECT Beyond study area and as such coordination between the two studies will be important for comprehensive mobility solutions for commuters. For more information visit: [www.beyond77.com](http://www.beyond77.com)

**Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) Bus Priority Study**

Building off of the completed Envision My Ride effort, the CATS Bus Priority Study will develop an enhanced bus network and accompanying operational and capital plan. The study will develop a mobility hub program and priority treatments such as bus only lanes and queue jumps. The CONNECT Beyond effort needs to coordinate with the CATS Bus Priority Study in order to synchronize and build off of analysis and potential recommendations. For more information visit: [www.RideTransit.org](http://www.RideTransit.org)

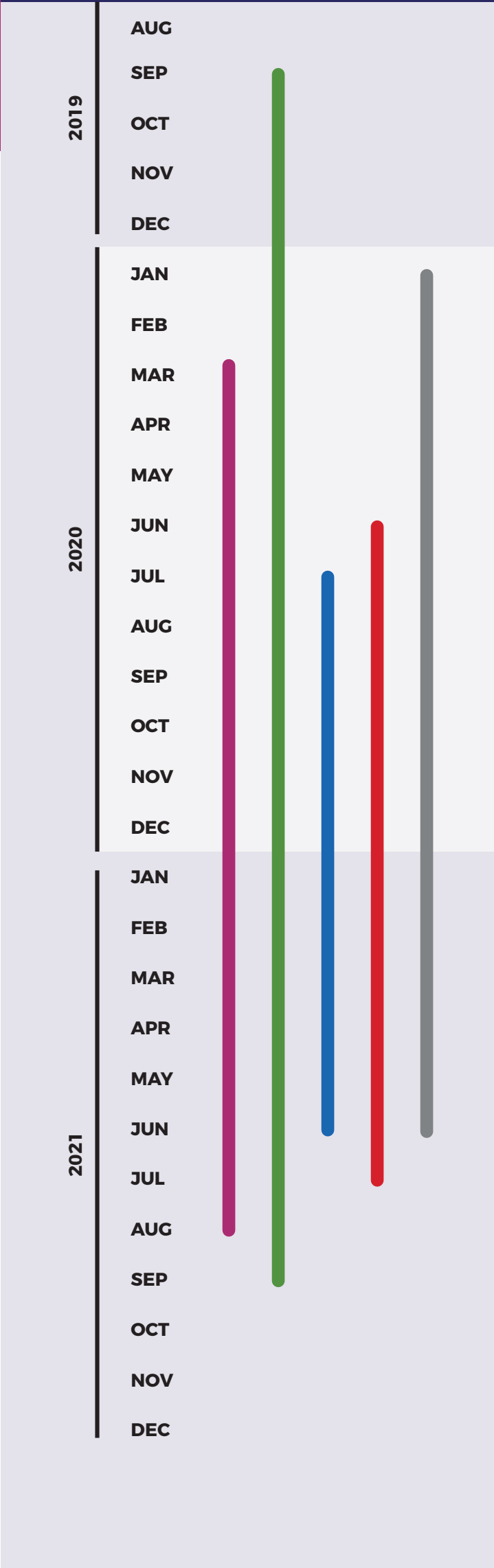
**CATS North Corridor I-77 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study**

The CATS North Corridor I-77 BRT Study looks to define an I-77 BRT operating and capital plan from Charlotte Gateway Station to Mooresville and define operating and service needs to Troutman and Statesville. The CATS North Corridor I-77 BRT Study mostly lies within the CONNECT Beyond study area and as such, coordination between the two studies will be important for comprehensive mobility solutions for commuters. For more information visit: [www.charlottenc.gov/cats/transit-planning/north-corridor-red-line](http://www.charlottenc.gov/cats/transit-planning/north-corridor-red-line)


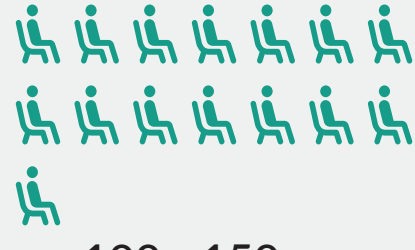

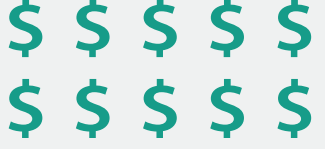




















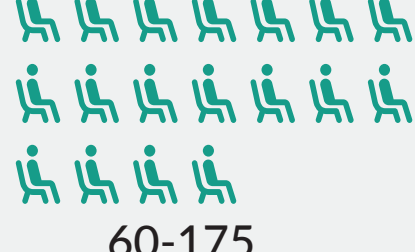

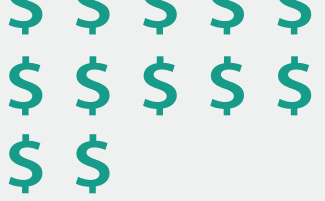

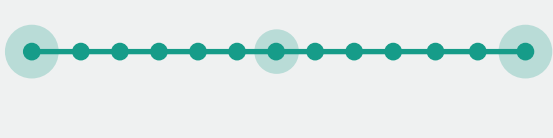










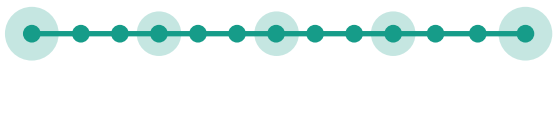




















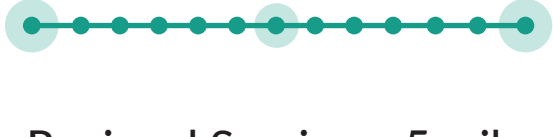


































**LYNX Silver Line: Design | Rail Trail | Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Studies**

CATS is currently advancing the LYNX Silver Line program through three comprehensive efforts; 1) Light rail design from Belmont to Indian Trail, 2) Definition of a Rail Trail along the entire project, and 3) A TOD study from Gastonia to Indian Trail to set the land use stage to support rapid transit. CONNECT Beyond will need to synchronize and build off of analysis and potential recommendations. For more information visit: [www.charlottenc.gov/cats/transit-planning/Pages/silver-line.aspx](http://www.charlottenc.gov/cats/transit-planning/Pages/silver-line.aspx)

**Anticipated Schedules**





Transit Mode	Average Passenger Capacity (per car)	Average Service Span & Frequency	Average Capital Cost Per Mile	Average Operating Cost	Service Area	Average Service Range	Average Distance between Station/Stops	Supportive Land Use	Peer City Examples	Existing In Our Region	Under Consideration/Development In Our Region
HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT											
 Inter-City Rail (Amtrak)	 100 - 150	 All day, Peak and Off Peak Services 10/60 min.	 \$75M to \$100M	\$190/hr. to \$370/hr.	 Regional Urban	Varies	 Regional Service = 1-5 miles Urban Areas = < 1 mile	 Residential (High Density)  Commercial/Office  Retail (Community-Serving)  Retail (Passenger-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Chicago</li><li>New York</li><li>San Francisco</li></ul>		
 Commuter Rail	 70-190	 Peak and Limited Off Peak Services 20/30 min.	 \$3M to \$30M	\$280/hr. to \$660/hr.	 Regional Urban	30 + miles	 2-5 miles	 Residential (High-Density)  Residential (Medium-Density)  Commercial/Office  Retail (Community-Serving)  Retail (Passenger-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Boston</li><li>Dallas</li><li>Fort Worth</li><li>San Francisco</li><li>San Jose</li></ul>		
 Light Rail	 60-175	 4AM to 1AM 10/20 min.	 \$80M to \$125M	\$190/hr. to \$370/hr.	 Regional Urban	10-20 miles	 1 mile	 Residential (High Density)  Commercial/Office  Retail (Community-Serving)  Retail (Passenger-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Denver</li><li>Dallas</li><li>Houston</li><li>Seattle</li></ul>		
 Streetcar	 30-100	 4AM to 1AM 10/20 min.	 \$5M to \$50M	\$130/hr. to \$250/hr.	 Urban	1 - 7 miles	 0.25 - 0.5 miles	 Residential (Medium-Density)  Residential (Low-Density)  Commercial/Office  Retail (Community-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Atlanta</li><li>Little Rock</li><li>Portland</li><li>Tampa</li></ul>		
 Bus Rapid Transit	 40-60	 4AM to 1AM 10/20 min.	 \$4M to \$36M	\$70/hr. to \$210/hr.	 Regional Suburban Urban	10-25 miles	 0.5 - 2 miles	 Residential (Medium-Density)  Residential (Low-Density)  Commercial/Office  Retail (Community-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Boston</li><li>Cleveland</li><li>Eugene</li><li>Pittsburgh</li></ul>		
 Express Bus	 50-60	5AM-9AM 3PM-8PM Various Trips	 \$100K +	\$70/hr. to \$230/hr.	 Regional Suburban Urban	15-20 miles	 Regional Service = 5 miles Urban Areas = > 1 mile	 Residential (Medium-Density)  Residential (Low-Density)  Retail (Community-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Boston</li><li>Dallas</li><li>Indianapolis</li><li>New York</li></ul>		
OTHER TRANSIT TYPES											
 Local	 40-60	 6AM to Midnight 20/90 min.	 \$100K +	\$70/hr. to \$100/hr.	 Regional Suburban Urban	15 miles	 0.25 - 1 mile	 Residential (Medium-Density)  Commercial/Office  Retail (Community-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Austin</li><li>Greenville</li><li>New York</li><li>Philadelphia</li></ul>		
 Circulator	 14-20	 6AM to 9PM 40/60 min.	 \$100K +	\$70/hr. to \$100/hr.	 Suburban	5 miles	 <0.25 - 0.5 miles	 Residential (Medium-Density)  Commercial/Office  Retail (Community-Serving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Orlando</li></ul>		
 Demand Responsive Transport	 4 - 20 per vehicle	Varies	 < \$	\$70/hr. to \$100/hr.	 Regional Suburban Urban	Varies	Curb to Curb	None Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fixed Route Supportive</li></ul>		
 Flex Bus	 4 - 20 per vehicle	Varies	 < \$	\$70/hr. to \$100/hr.	 Suburban Rural	Varies - measured in sq. miles	Curb to Curb	 Residential (Low-Density)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tallahassee</li></ul>	