

# Transit System Plan Update

**Metropolitan Transit Commission**

**April 30, 2025**



# Presentation Outline

- 1 Public Engagement Summary
- 2 Key Findings & Recommendations
- 3 Next Steps



# Round 1 Public Engagement



# Goals

Serve

## Our Customers

Transit is customer focused first, moving people with dignity and comfort to improve the lives of individuals.

# 1

Advance

## Economic Mobility

Transit is an economic equalizer, connecting people to the diversity of opportunities across our region.

# 2

Foster

## Sustainability & Innovation

Transit is a leader in mobility innovation and sustainability, shaping the future of how we move and grow.

# 3

# Objectives

- ❖ Provide competitive and reliable transit service
- ❖ Provide equity in service
- ❖ Expand area, comfort and convenience

- ❖ Increase access to jobs & housing
- ❖ Increase access to education & services
- ❖ Increase access to the region

- ❖ Expand mobility choices & connectivity
- ❖ Shape growth & equitable development
- ❖ Foster sustainability

# TSP Round 1 Public Input Takeaways

October 2024 - January 2025

- ▶ **93%** of participants say more transit options are needed in Mecklenburg County
- ▶ **95%** of participants agree with the proposed goals and objectives

**Expand services** comments include expanding rail, bus service enhancements, and park and rides

**Improve existing transit** comments include transit user experience, reliability, and maintenance and safety

Comments related to the **proposed goals and priorities** included the themes of increasing access to the region, reliability and frequency, reducing traffic congestion, equity, safety and security, environmental impacts, and TOD

Comments related to **community engagement** note transparency and communication

# Round 2 Public Engagement



# Transit System Plan Update: Fiscally Constrained Scenarios

Presented to the Public for Input

	Red Line North	Better Bus	Gold Line Extension West   East		Silver Line   Silver Line West   East			Blue Line Extension Pineville   Ballantyne	
<b>1</b> Scenario	Commuter Rail LPA	Better Bus Systemwide Expansion	Streetcar Extension to Rosa Parks	Streetcar Extension to Eastland	Future Light Rail Extension	Light Rail Airport to Coliseum/Ovens	Future Light Rail Extension	Light Rail I-485 Station to Pineville	Future Light Rail Extension
<b>2</b> Scenario	Commuter Rail LPA	Better Bus Systemwide Expansion	Streetcar Extension to Rosa Parks	Streetcar Extension to Eastland	Future Light Rail Extension	Light Rail Airport to 11 <sup>th</sup> St/Blue Line	Bus Rapid Transit Gateway Station to Matthews	Light Rail I-485 Station to Pineville	Future Light Rail Extension
<b>3</b> Scenario	Commuter Rail LPA	Better Bus Systemwide Expansion	Streetcar Extension to Rosa Parks	Streetcar Extension to Eastland	Bus Rapid Transit I-485/Airport to Matthews			Light Rail I-485 Station to Ballantyne	
<b>4</b> Scenario	Commuter Rail LPA	Better Bus Systemwide Expansion	Streetcar Extension to Rosa Parks	Streetcar Extension to Eastland	Bus Rapid Transit I-485/Airport to Matthews			Bus Rapid Transit To Pineville Ballantyne	

**Assumptions:**

1. All Scenarios include Blue Line 3-car Platform expansion
2. All Scenarios complete in 30 years
3. Better Bus accounts for 20% of sales tax
4. Future Light Rail Extension would be served by enhanced bus service until LRT is extended

# TSP Round 2 Outreach

February - April 2025



Social media: **81** posts across platforms, **32** stories, and **150+** shares of CATS posts



**Three** e-blasts to **7,400+** subscribers;  
**Four** text messages to **1,800+** subscribers



**15K** Hanging Rider Alerts installed on CATS bus and rail vehicles



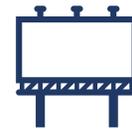
**4,000+** printed materials at libraries and community centers,  
**300+** flyers posted at CATS stations,  
**35** yard signs distributed



Newspaper Advertisements in *La Noticia, Charlotte Post, and Charlotte Observer*



**59.7K** impressions from Norsan media Spanish radio ads



Billboard on 4th Street and I-277 exit



19 News articles with **436.9M reach** (2025)



Promotion on CATS / CMGC internal screens, CATS-Pass app, and RideTransit.org

# TSP Round 2 Engagement

## February - April 2025



6,830+ Transit System Plan webpage visitors  
[www.catstransitsystemplanupdate.com](http://www.catstransitsystemplanupdate.com)



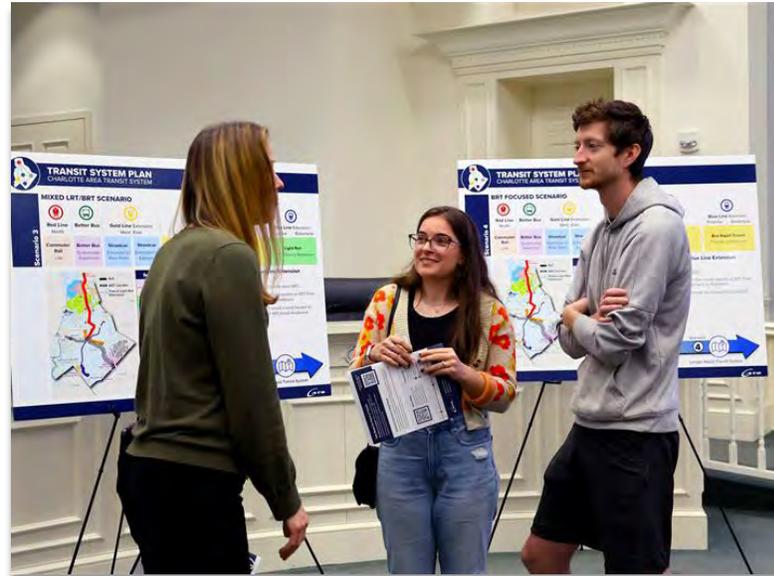
6 Public Meetings with 125+ Attendees  
480+ Virtual Public Meeting Views



26 Community and Stakeholder Meetings  
8 Pop-Up Events



150+ Community Organizations &  
75+ Neighborhood Groups received  
emails and invites for the TSP



# TSP Round 2 Engagement

February - April 2025



## Community survey February 21 - April 11 (with incentive)

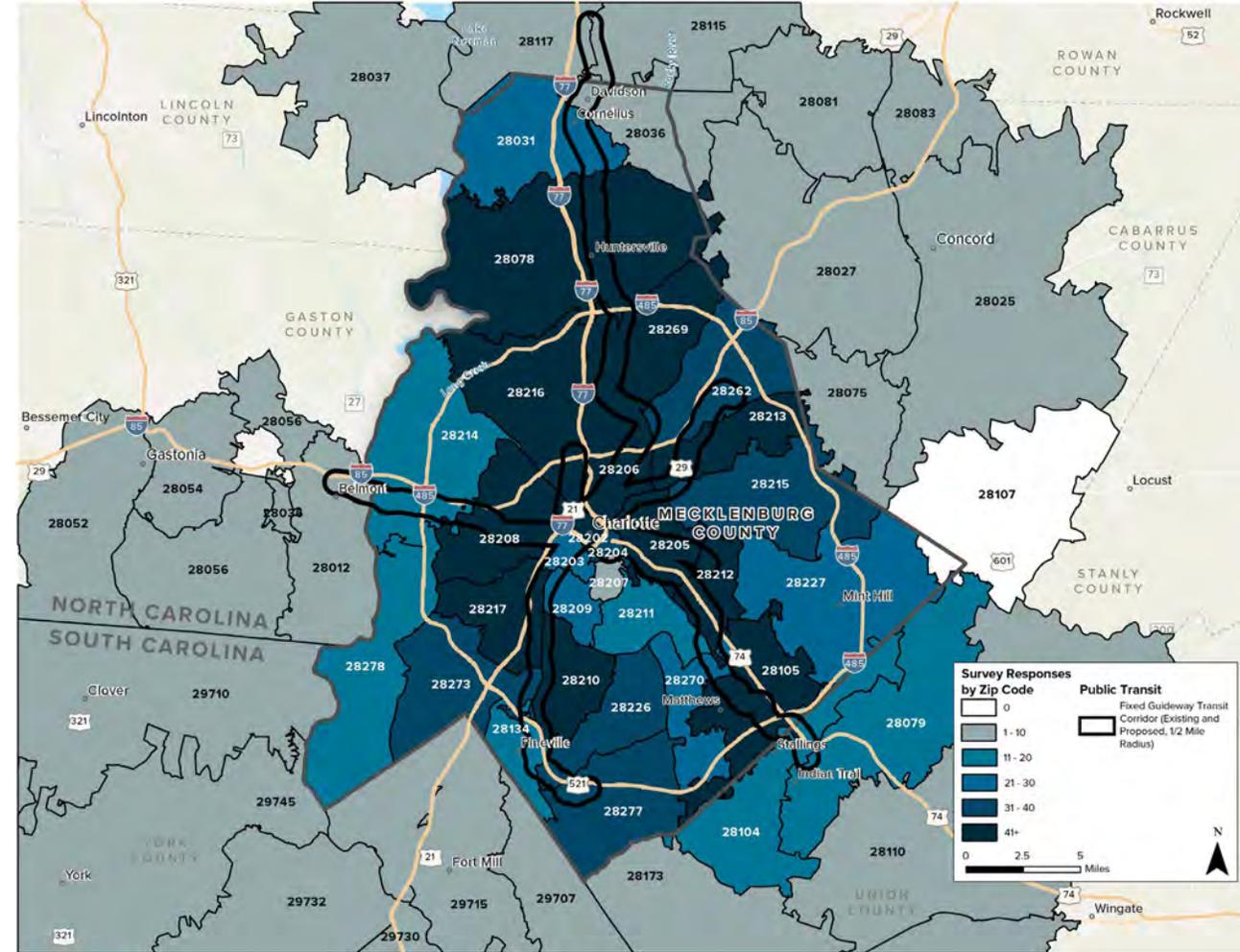
- What are the most important benefits of a future rapid transit system?
- What are the most important benefits of a future Better Bus system?
- Tell us what you think about the alternative program scenarios for the Transit System Plan?



**1,560+ survey participants & 1,060+ comments submitted**



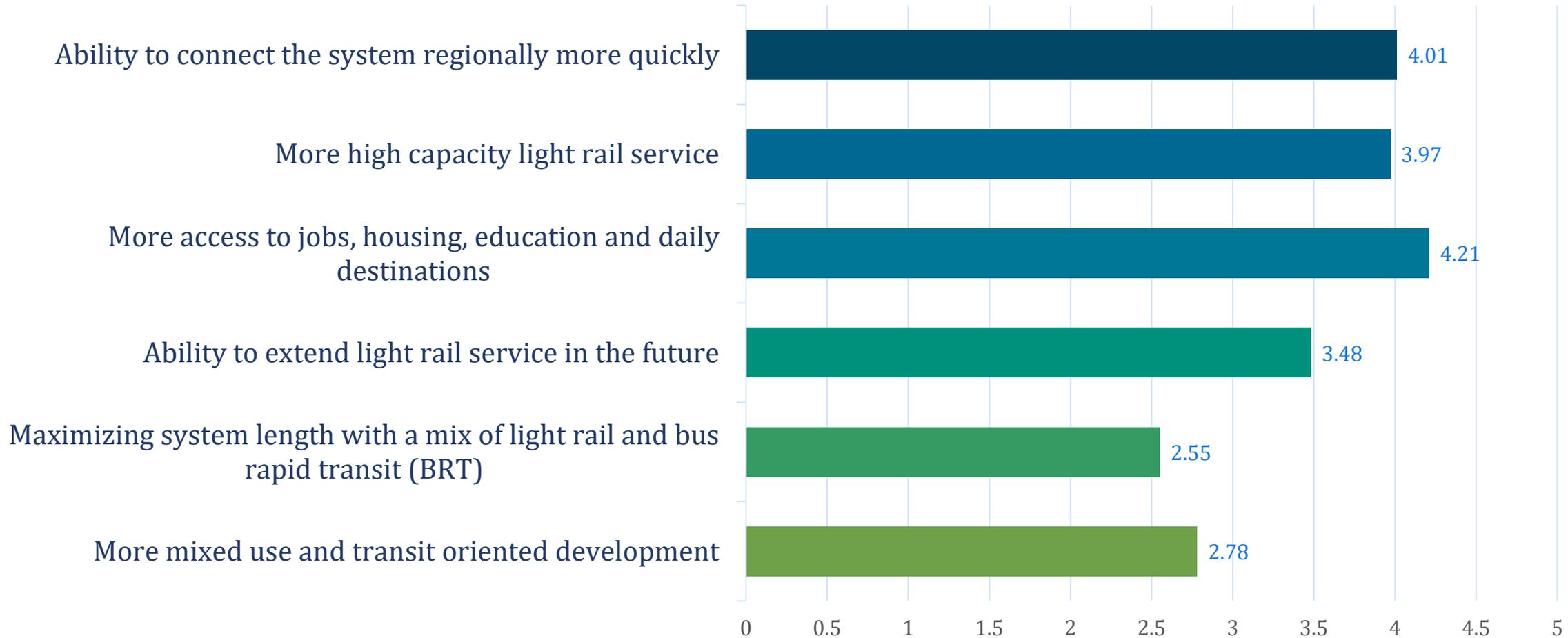
**Feedback received from all zip codes in Mecklenburg County**



# TSP Round 2 Public Input

## What are the most important benefits of a future rapid transit system?

Rank in order of importance, with the most important first and the least important last. (1,470 participants)

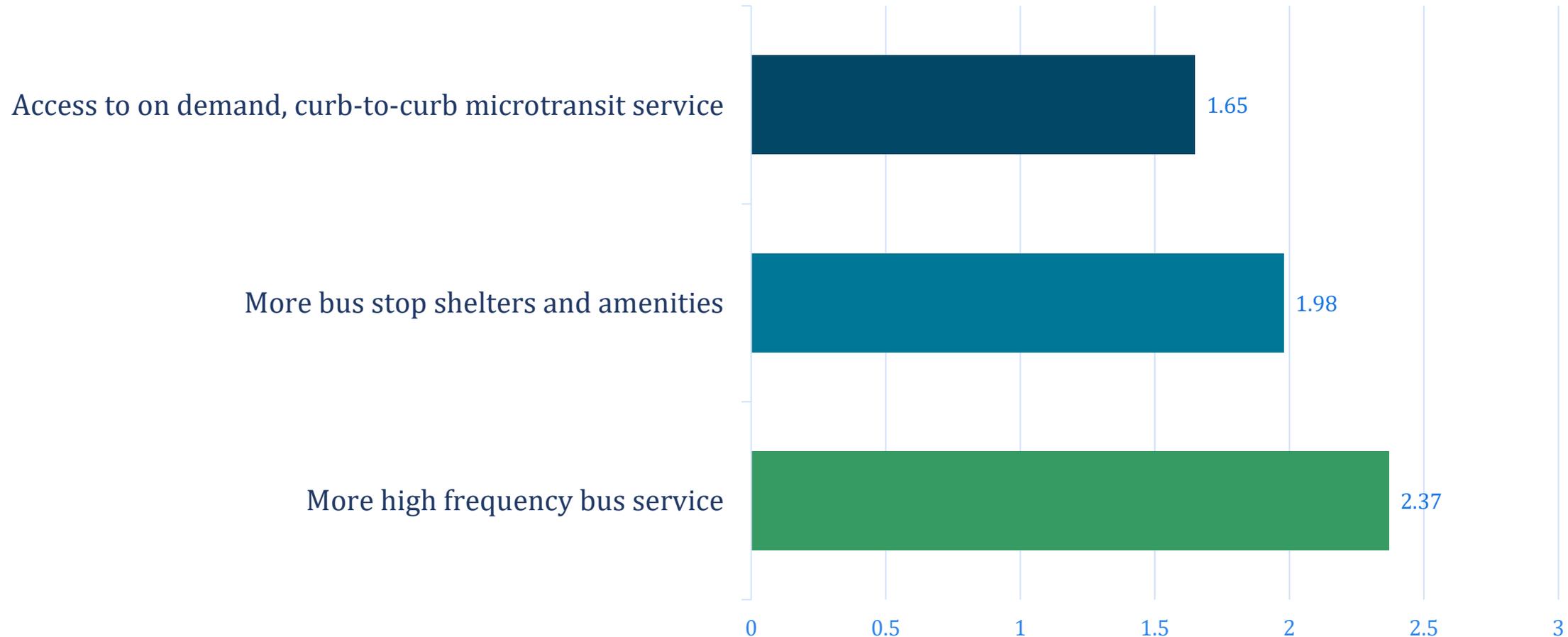


Score - Sum of the weight of each ranked position, multiplied by the response count for the position choice, divided by the total contributions. Weights are inverse to ranked positions.

# TSP Round 2 Public Input

## What are the most important benefits of a future Better Bus System?

Rank in order of importance, with the most important first and the least important last. (1,470 participants)

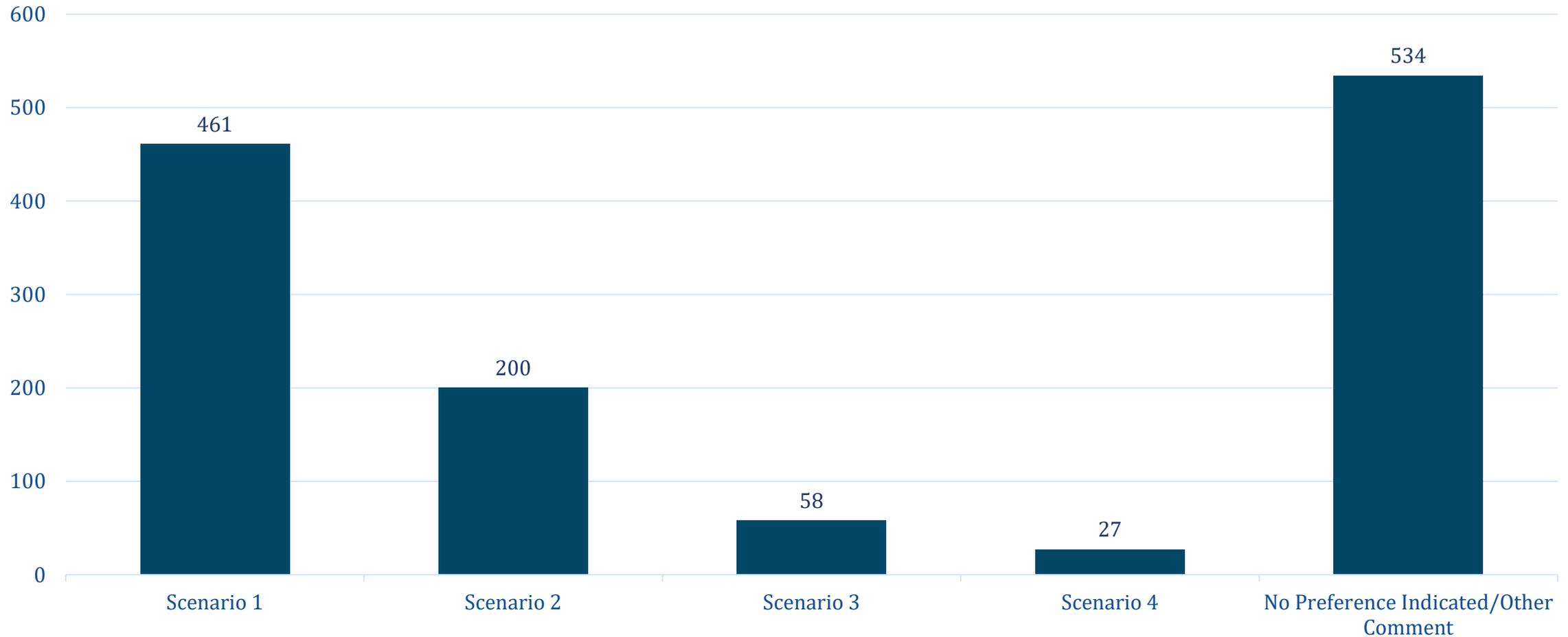


Score - Sum of the weight of each ranked position, multiplied by the response count for the position choice, divided by the total contributions. Weights are inverse to ranked positions.

# TSP Round 2 Public Input

**Tell us what you think about the alternative program scenarios for the Transit System Plan.**

(531 comments indicated a preference for a scenario (some comments contained more than one preference). There were 1,065 total responses to this question.)



# TSP Round 2 Public Input

Tell us what you think about the alternative program scenarios for the Transit System Plan.

## Top 1-5 Comment Themes

1,060+ Comments Received

\*some comments contain multiple themes

**1. Build Light Rail to the Airport:** Comments highlighting the importance of having a light rail connection to the airport, mentioning benefits for tourists, airport workers, and overall convenience.

**2. General Positive Feedback:** Comments that express support, enthusiasm, and optimism about CATS projects and transit expansion. Comments convey an overall affirmative stance.

**3. Enhance Frequency and Reliability of Bus Services:** Comments emphasizing the need for more frequent and reliable bus services to reduce wait times and improve overall transit efficiency.

**4. Build Light Rail to East Charlotte:** Comments supporting the extension of light rail services to East Charlotte and Matthews, discussing how this expansion would improve connectivity and reduce traffic congestion.

**5. Prioritize Rail for Long Term Benefits:** Comments emphasizing the long-term benefits of investing in rail infrastructure, highlighting the potential for higher ridership and reducing traffic congestion.

# TSP Round 2 Public Input

Tell us what you think about the alternative program scenarios for the Transit System Plan.

## Top 6-10 Comment Themes

1,060+ Comments Received

\*some comments contain multiple themes

### 6. Increase Access to Jobs, Housing, Services, and Surrounding Areas:

Comments emphasizing the importance of improved transit connectivity to enhance access to employment opportunities, affordable housing, essential services, and neighboring areas.

### 7. Increase Safety and Cleanliness of Existing Transit:

Comments stressing the importance of maintaining clean and safe transit environments to encourage more people to use public transportation.

### 8. Extend Blue Line to Pineville and Ballantyne:

Comments supporting the extension of light rail services to Pineville and Ballantyne, highlighting the benefits for commuters and reducing traffic congestion in these areas.

### 9. Concerns about Bus Rapid Transit (BRT):

Comments expressing skepticism, criticism, or opposition toward BRT as a transportation solution. Concerns mention low ridership potential, lack of dedicated lanes, and inefficiency compared to light rail.

### 10. Focus on Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):

Comments advocating for development projects that integrate transit options, promoting mixed-use developments around transit stops to enhance accessibility and reduce car dependency.

# TSP Round 2 Public Input

## 1,560+ Survey Participants

- ▶ **More access to jobs, housing, education, and daily destinations** was ranked the most important benefit of the future rapid transit system
- ▶ **More high frequency bus service** was ranked the most important benefit of the future Better Bus System

## General Takeaways

### Preference for Rail

The community shows a preference for the scenarios with light rail rather than bus rapid transit (BRT).

### Improve Customer Experience

There is a need for enhancements to the existing transit system, including increased frequency, improved safety, and better cleanliness.

### Advance Transit Expansion

There is a desire and urgency for transit expansion to meet the growing demand and keep pace with regional growth.

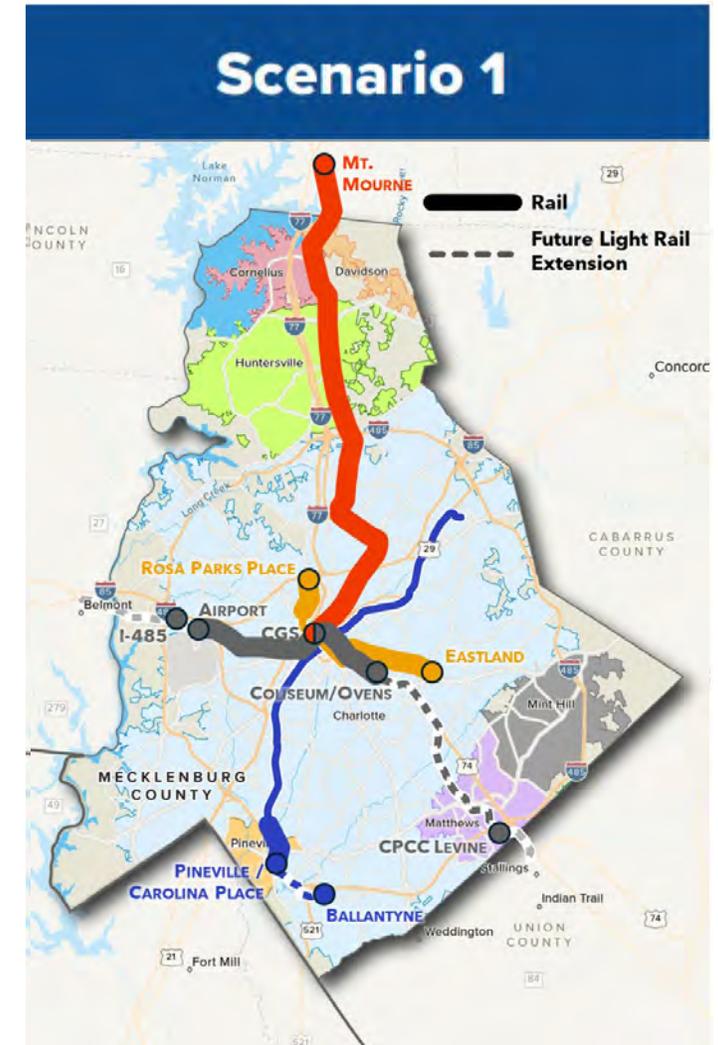
# Key Findings & Recommendations



# Staff Recommendation

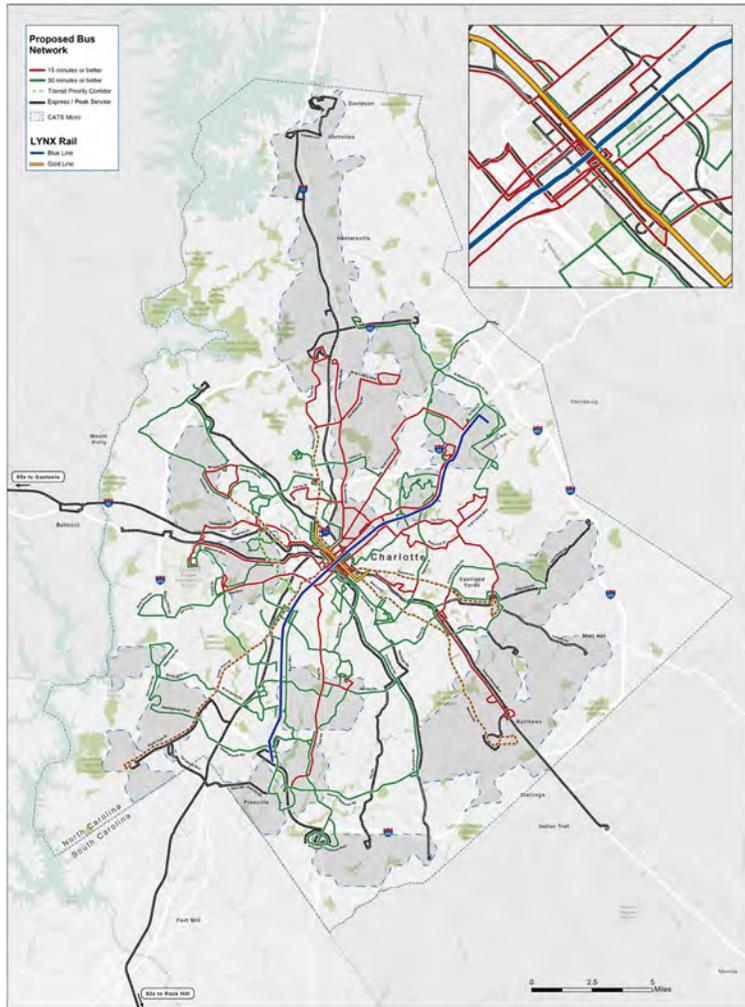
- ▶ **Scenario 1: Phased Implementation of adopted Transit System Plan**
  - Consistency with adopted plan
  - Project readiness
  - Public input
- ▶ **Prioritize Better Bus Program**
  - Commitment to full program of frequency improvements, service expansion, and Micro-Transit within the first 5 years
  - Expand Better Bus program based on future growth and ridership, and as funding allows
- ▶ **Phased Implementation of Rapid Transit Corridors**
  - Silver Line from Airport to Coliseum/Ovens
  - Gold Line Extension from Rosa Parks Place to Eastland
  - Blue Line Extension from I-485/South Blvd to Carolina Place Mall (Pineville)
  - Future extensions of light rail for Silver Line west to I-485 and east to Matthews and Blue Line to Ballantyne would be considered as funding allows, with enhanced bus service implemented in interim
- ▶ **Study and evaluate options to extend light rail for Silver Line East, including other funding opportunities**

*Consistent with proposed legislation in General Assembly*



# Better Bus

## CATS Service Area



### Service Expansion and Improvements

- **50% increase in service in first five years**
- 15 routes improved to 15-minute frequency, serving 60% of existing ridership
- All routes improved to 30-minute or better frequency
- Fully implement CATS Micro program across the county
- Priority bus corridors with signal priority
- Expanded express route service
- Additional paratransit service to accommodate growth
- **Implementation of service expansion complete within five years**

### Capital Investments

- Bus stop improvements - 2,000 total additional shelters, benches, waiting pads
- Fleet expansion - 89 new buses
- Operator support facilities
- Bus replacements for new and expanded service
- CTC renovation and CGS bus facility
- **Bus stop capital investments complete within ten years**

# Better Bus

What we've heard

## How will public feedback inform the Better Bus program?

- Public feedback is critical to the success of the Better Bus program. For example, CATS staff is making adjustment to the micro-transit zone in Northwest Charlotte

## How does CATS micro integrate with local bus service?

- Transfer between a local bus route and CATS micro is free. Today CATS customers are using Route 7 Beatties Ford Rd and are seamlessly connecting to CATS micro.

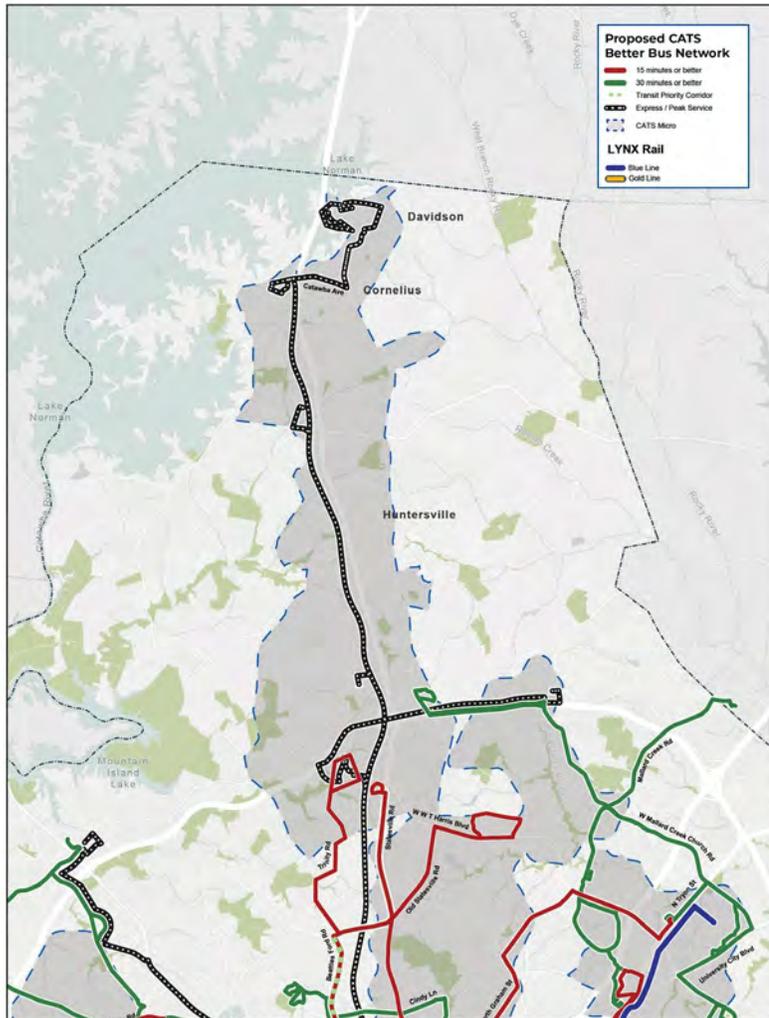
## How quickly will service improvements occur?

- With new funding high frequency service and micro-transit expansion would begin in July 2026 with full implementation of the Better Bus program in 5 years.



# Better Bus

## North Mecklenburg

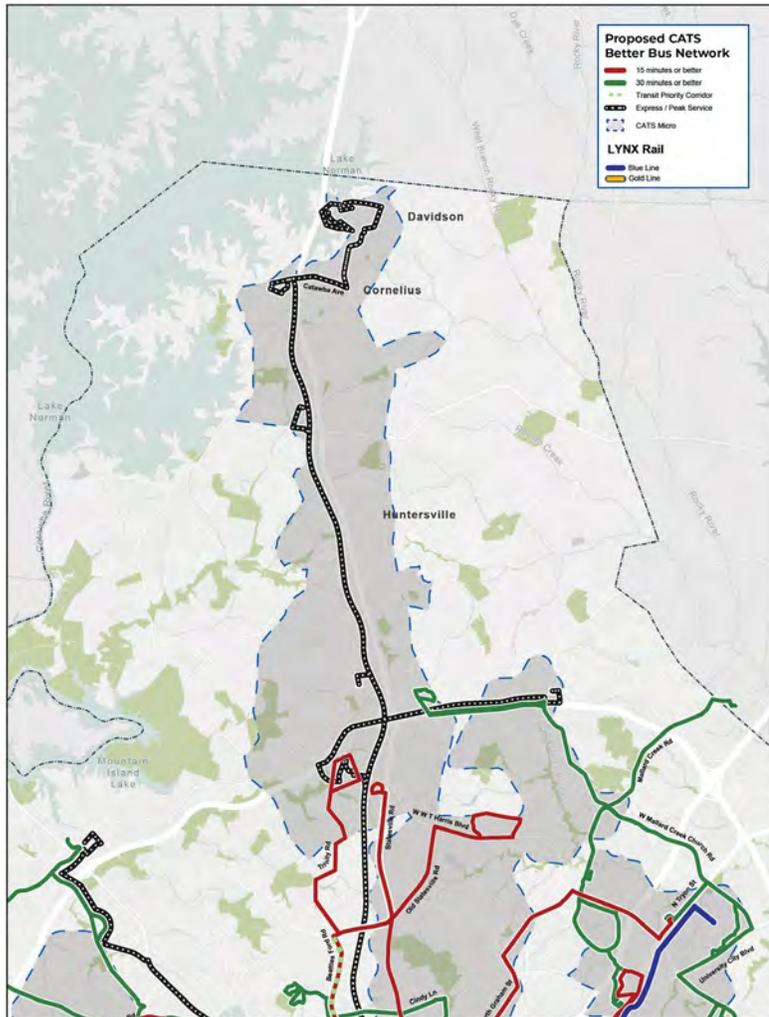


## North Charlotte

- **Priority bus corridors with signal priority and enhanced stops**
  - Beatties Ford Rd
- **Five routes improved to 15-minute or better frequency**
  - LaSalle St / Norris Ave (3)
  - Beatties Ford Rd (7)
  - N Tryon St (11)
  - Statesville Rd (21)
  - Graham St (22)
- **Improved express frequency with midday service**
  - Northlake / Prosperity Creek (53X)
- **CATS Micro zone currently serving**
  - Northlake Area

# Better Bus

## North Mecklenburg



### Davidson, Cornelius, and Huntersville

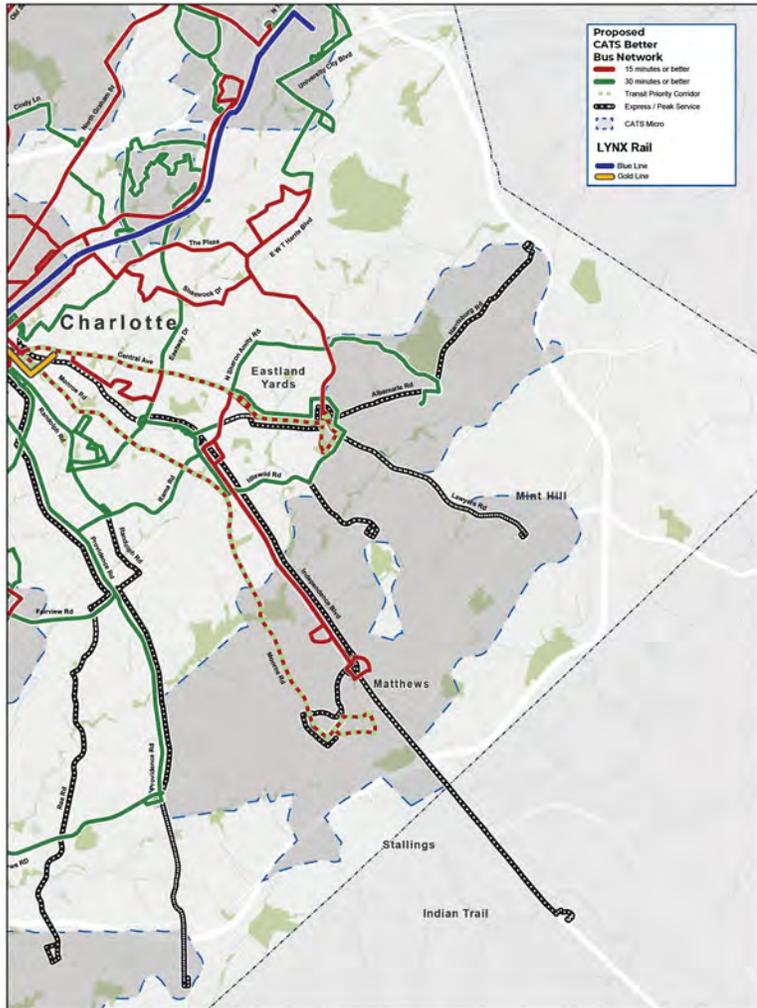
- **Improved express frequency with midday service**
  - Huntersville (48X, 63X)
  - Cornelius / Davidson (77X)
  - New Route to serve Hambright Park and Ride
- **CATS Micro zone currently serving**
  - All Downtowns
  - Davidson
    - Davidson College
    - Circles 30
  - Cornelius
    - Antiquity
    - Catawba Ave
  - Huntersville
    - Birkdale Village
    - Bryton Town Center

### North Mecklenburg

- **All routes improved to 30-minute or better frequency**
- **Major expansion of bus stop amenities**

# Better Bus

## East Mecklenburg

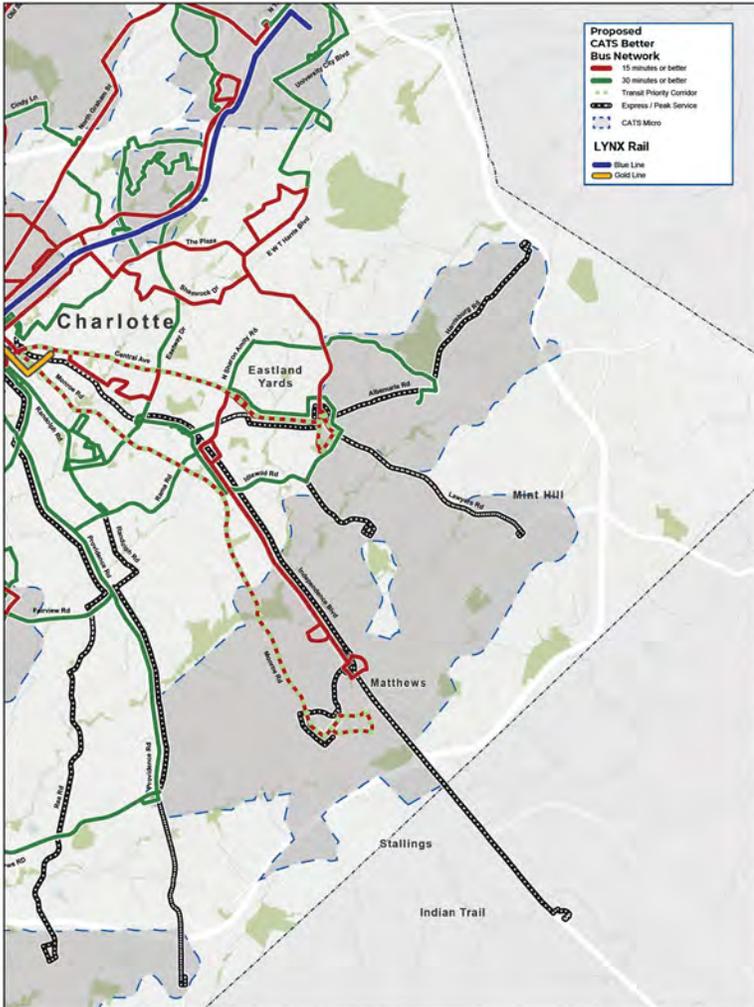


## East Charlotte

- **Priority bus corridors with signal priority and enhanced stops**
  - Central Ave
  - Monroe Rd
- **Five routes improved to 15-minute or better frequency**
  - The Plaza / WT Harris (3)
  - Central Ave (9)
  - Commonwealth / Independence (17)
  - Shamrock Dr (23)
  - Monroe Rd (27)
- **Improved express frequency with midday service**
  - Lawyers Rd (40X)
  - Harrisburg Rd (46X)
  - Idlewild Rd (52X)
- **CATS Micro zones serving**
  - Albemarle Rd,
  - Harrisburg Rd
  - Independence Blvd
  - Lawyers Rd

# Better Bus

## East Mecklenburg



### Matthews

- **Priority bus corridors with signal priority and enhanced stops**
  - Monroe Rd/John St
- **Two routes improved to 15-minute or better frequency**
  - Independence (17)
  - Monroe Rd/John St (27)
- **Improved express frequency with midday service**
  - Matthews (64x)
- **CATS Micro zone serving**
  - CPCC Levine, Brace YMCA, Downtown Matthews, Windsor Square

### Mint Hill

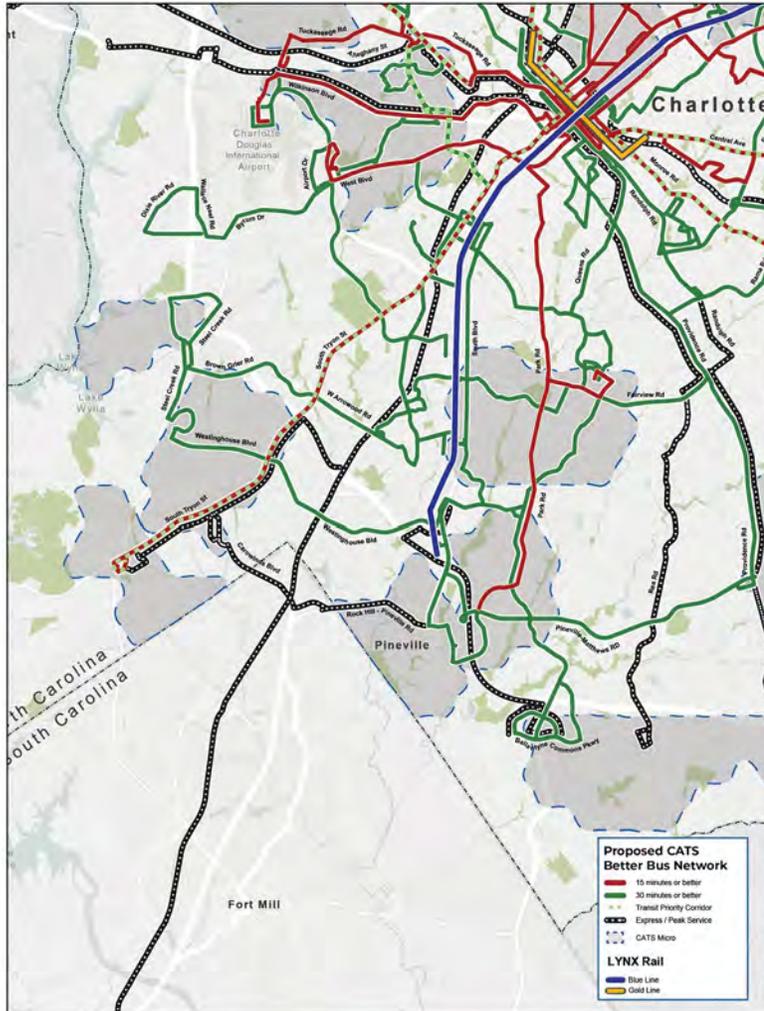
- **Improved express frequency with midday service**
  - Lawyers Rd (40x)
- **CATS Micro zone serving**
  - Matthews-Mint Hill Rd, Lawyers Rd

### East Mecklenburg

- **All routes improved to 30-minute or better frequency**
- **Major expansion of bus stop amenities**

# Better Bus

## South Mecklenburg

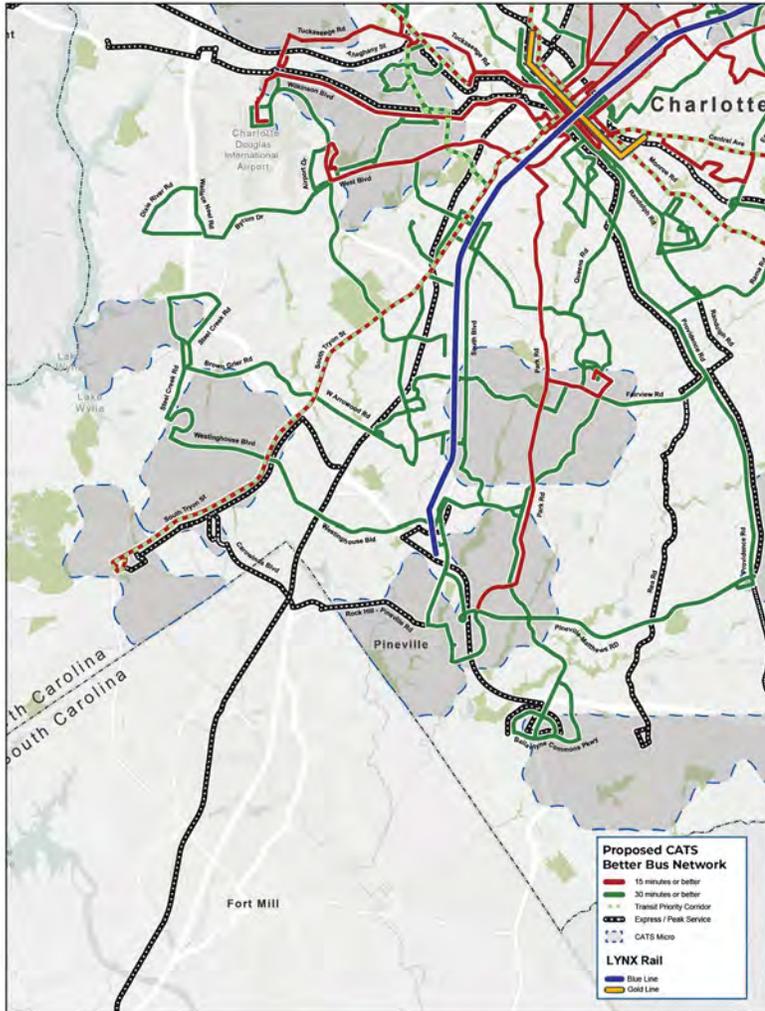


### South Charlotte

- **Priority bus corridors with signal priority and enhanced stops**
  - South Tryon St
- **Two routes improved to 15-minute or better frequency**
  - South Tryon St (16)
  - Park Rd (19)
- **Improved express frequency with midday service**
  - Steele Creek (41X)
  - Providence Rd (61X)
  - Rea Rd (62X)
  - New Ballantyne Express to the LYNX Blue Line
- **CATS Micro zones serving**
  - Ballantyne
  - Park Crossing
  - Starmount
  - Quail Hollow
  - Steele Creek

# Better Bus

## South Mecklenburg



### Pineville

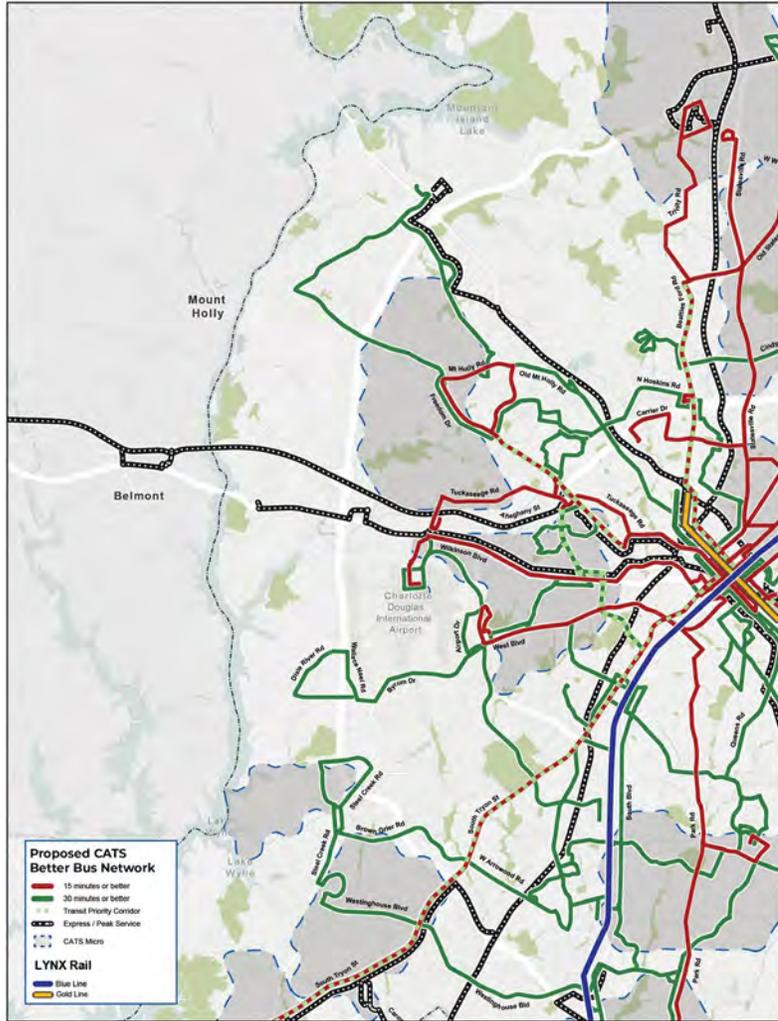
- **One route improved to 15-minute or better frequency**
  - Park Rd (19)
- **CATS Micro zone serving**
  - Downtown
  - Carolina Place Mall
  - Highway 51
  - Park Rd
  - Atrium Health Pineville

### South Mecklenburg

- **All routes improved to 30-minute or better frequency**
- **Major expansion of bus stop amenities**

# Better Bus

## West Mecklenburg

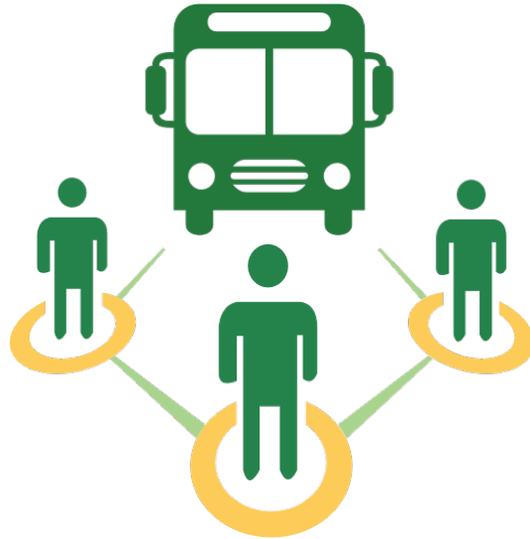


## West Charlotte

- **Priority bus corridors with signal priority and enhanced stops**
  - Ashley Rd/Remount Rd
  - Beatties Ford Rd
  - Freedom Dr
  - S Tryon St
- **Six routes improved to 15-minute or better frequency**
  - Wilkinson Blvd / Morehead St (Sprinter Airport)
  - Beatties Ford Rd (7)
  - Tuckaseegee Rd (8)
  - West Blvd with extension to River District (10)
  - S Tryon St (16)
  - Freedom Dr (34)
- **Improved express frequency with midday service**
  - Mountain Island (88X)
- **CATS Micro zones serving**
  - Coulwood
  - Paw Creek
  - West Blvd/Wilkinson Blvd neighborhoods
  - Berewick/Charlotte Premium Outlets
- **All routes improved to 30-minute or better frequency**
- **Major expansion of bus stop amenities including proposed mobility hub at Freedom Dr/Ashley Rd**

# Better Bus

CATS Service Area



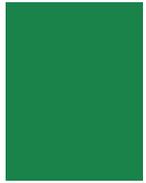
**250K more** people within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of transit will have access to 15-minute frequency compared to **~29K** today

Within a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, high frequency access increases to an additional **200k more** people for a total of **450k**



**72%** of Mecklenburg County will have access to at least 30-minute service within a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile (increases to over 90% within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile)

**Microtransit** increases transit access by over **100** square miles



# Better Bus

CATS Service Area



**91k** more low-income individuals will have access to 15-minute frequency compared to **19k** today

**202K** more people of color will have access to 15-minute frequency compared to **40k** today

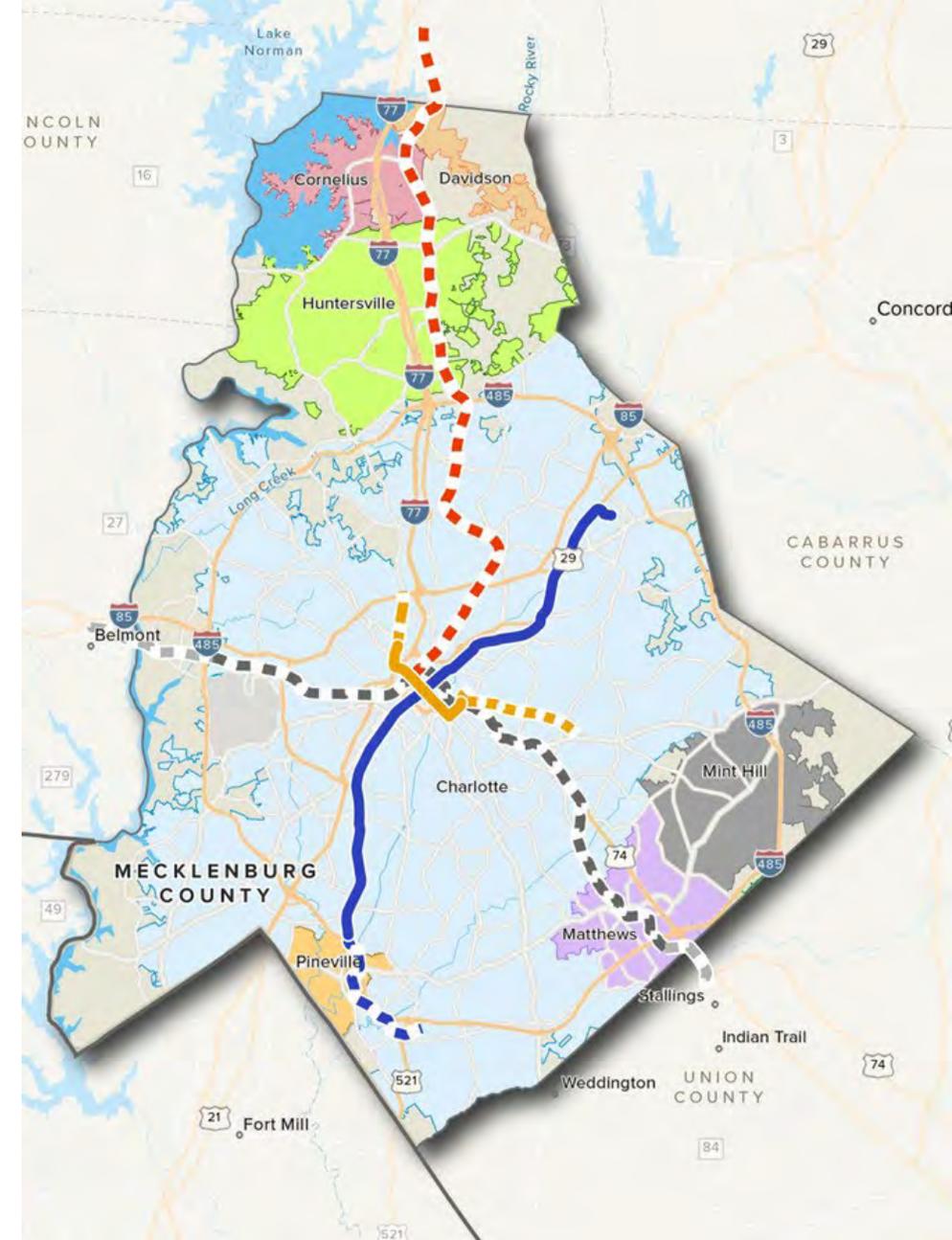


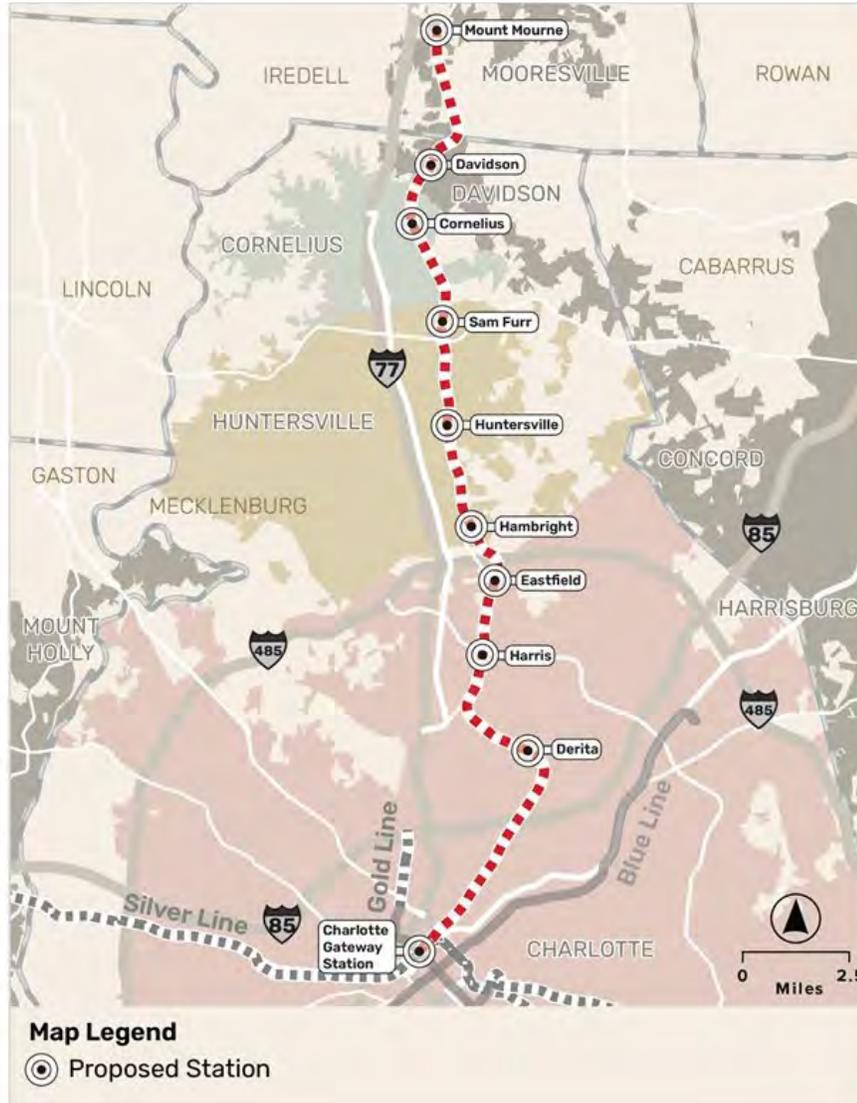
Over **320k** more jobs accessible within a ½ mile of the 15-minute frequency network compared to **127K** today.

# Rapid Transit Corridors

- ▶ **Red Line** Commuter Rail
  - LPA: Charlotte Gateway Station to Mt. Mourne
- ▶ **Silver Line** Light Rail
  - LPA: Belmont to Indian Trail
  - MOS: Airport to Coliseum Ovens
- ▶ **Gold Line Extension** Streetcar
  - LPA: Rosa Parks to Eastland
- ▶ **Blue Line Extension** Light Rail
  - LPA: I-485/South Blvd to Ballantyne
  - MOS: I-485/South Blvd to Carolina Place (Pineville)

*\*MOS included in fiscally constrained plan*





## Red Line

Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

Charlotte Gateway Station  
to Mt. Mourne

## Project Description



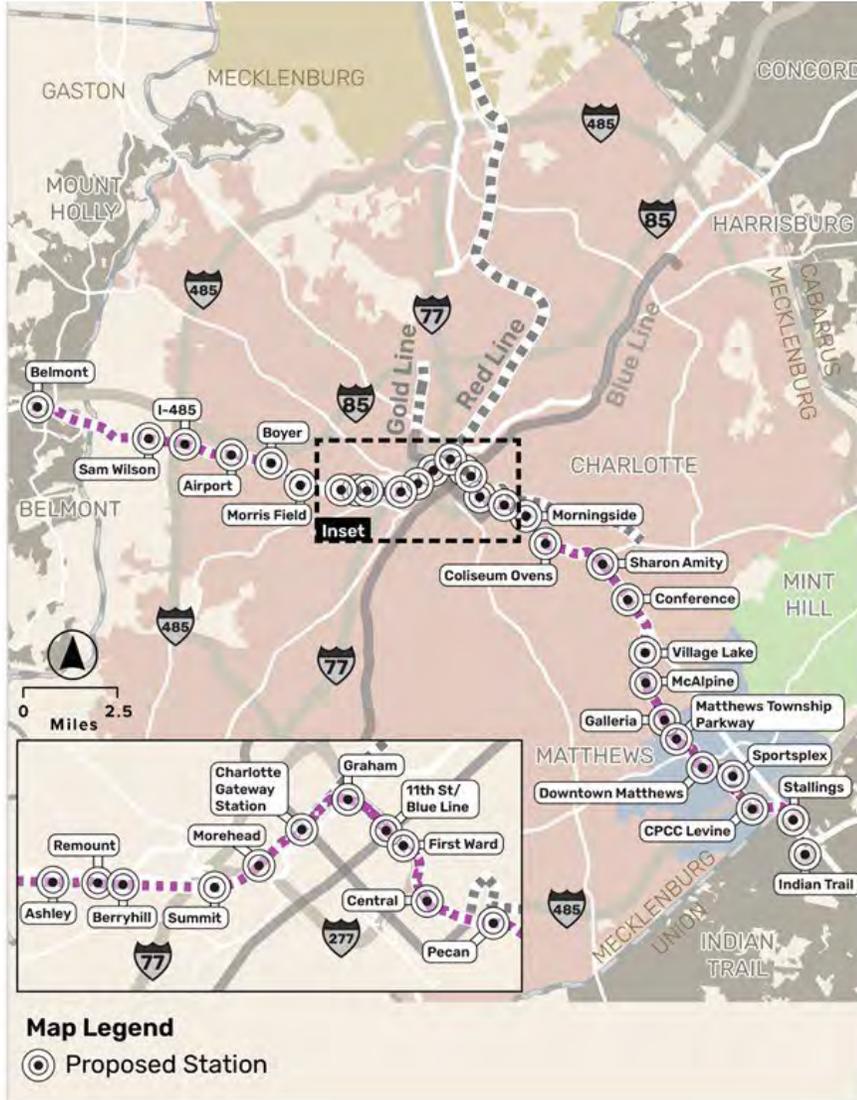
- Commuter Rail
- 25 miles with 10 stations



## Preliminary Service Plan



- 30-minute peak frequency; 1-hour frequency mid-day and weekends
- Up to 42 trips per day



## Silver Line

Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

Belmont to Indian Trail

## Project Description



- Light Rail
- 29 miles and 30 stations

## Preliminary Service Plan

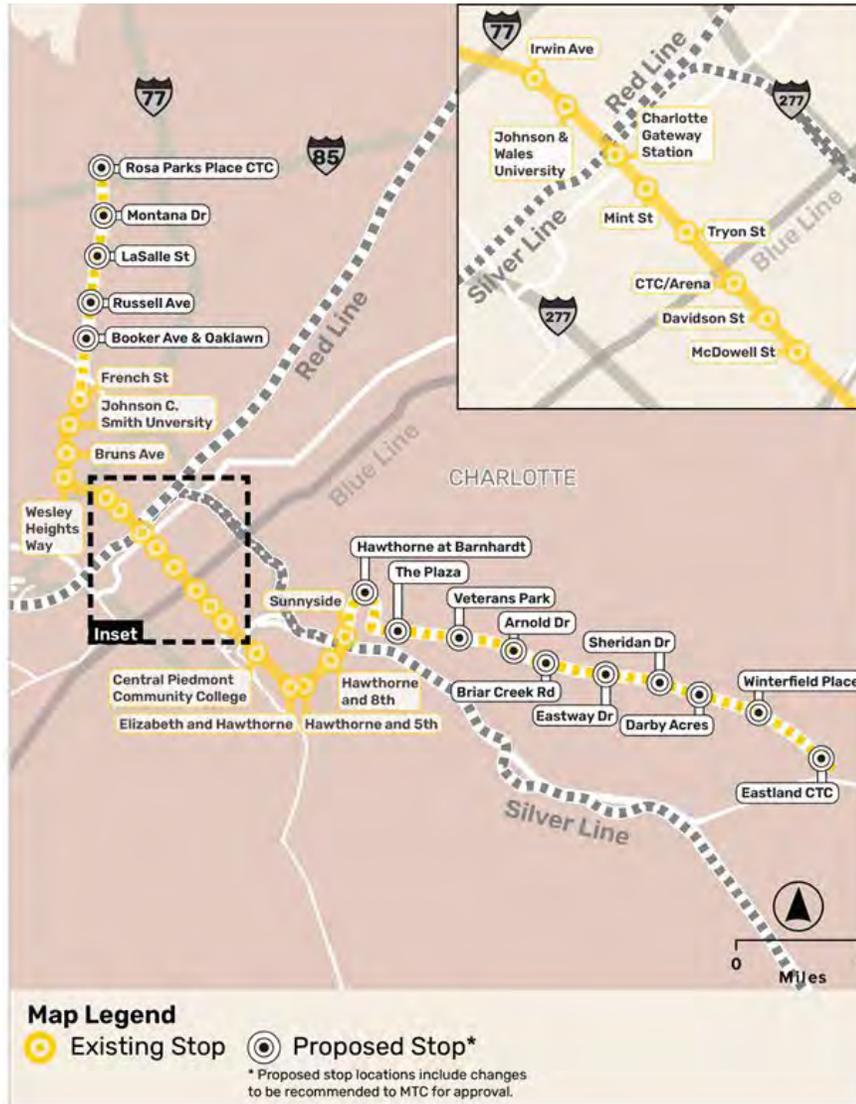


- Service from 5AM to 2AM
- 10-minute peak frequency, 15-20 minute frequency off peak and weekends

## Minimum Operable Segment (Fiscally Constrained Project)

Airport to Coliseum/Ovens





## Gold Line Extension

*Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)*

French Street to Rosa Parks Place Community Transit Center (CTC) (West); Sunnyside Avenue to Eastland Community Transit Center (CTC) (East)

## Project Description



- Streetcar
- 2 miles (West); 4 miles (East)

## Preliminary Service Plan



- Service from 6AM to 12AM
- 15-minute frequency during the day; 30-minute frequency at night





## Blue Line Extension

*Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)*

I-485/South Boulevard to  
Community House Road

## Project Description



- Light Rail
- 5 miles and 5 stations



## Preliminary Service Plan



- Service from 5AM to 2AM
- 10-minute peak frequency, 15-20 minute frequency off peak and weekends

## Minimum Operable Segment (Fiscally Constrained Project)

I-485/South Blvd. to Carolina Place Mall

# Financial Plan Summary

- ▶ Goal: Identify a program that is **realistic, constrained** and **implementable**
- ▶ Represents a **snapshot in time** and will evolve as the program advances
- ▶ All **projects are in early stages** of project design: costs and schedules will solidify as projects advance
- ▶ Cost estimates and revenue projections are based on reasonable, **conservative assumptions**
  - Financial model assumptions were reviewed at the 10/23/24 and 1/22/25 MTC meetings
- ▶ **Costs and revenues are balanced** to support successful implementation of the transit program

# Implementation Strategy

## Short Term

### Better Bus & Initial Expansion



Improve **frequency for bus and rail** services, expand **micro-transit**, and enhance **bus infrastructure** and **customer experience**



Begin **Red Line** commuter rail service, and start construction on **Silver Line**

## Mid Term

### Expand and Maintain



Begin **Silver Line** light rail service; start construction and begin service on **Gold Line Extension**



Expand platform capacity and extend service on the **Blue Line** to Pineville.

Maintain State of Good Repair system-wide

## Long Term

### Extend as Financial Capacity Allows



Expand **Better Bus program** based on future growth and ridership

Extend **Silver Line (East)** to Matthews and Union County, extend **Silver Line (West)** to I-485 and Belmont, and extend **Blue Line** to Ballantyne

# Next Steps

## May MTC Meeting

- ▶ **Adopt Transit System Plan with fiscally constrained implementation strategy**
  - Commitment to rapid implementation of Better Bus Program within 5 years
  - Phased implementation of Rapid Transit Corridors



Thank you!