

Stakeholder Interview Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive review and analysis of the Stakeholder Interviews carried out by the Durham Transit Team during November and December, 2020.

Stakeholder Interview Schedule

There were a total of 58 groups contacted (Listed below). Out of the groups contacted, fifteen groups agreed to meet with the Durham Transit Team staff. Staff lead thirteen group meetings (with similarly structured groups meeting together; 17 distinct groups total). Below is the schedule of each of these meetings:

- Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Commission - 11/17/2020
- NCCU – 11/18/2020
- Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce - 11/20/2020
- Durham Tech - 11/23/2020
- Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People - 11/23/2020
- Durham Downtown Inc. - 11/24/2020
- Durham CAN – 11/11/20
- Reality Ministries – 11/11/20
- Youth Transit Equity Forum - 12/02/2020
- Senior Public Housing Forum – 10/15/2020
- Duke University - 10/29/2020
- Human Relations Commission - 11/10/2020
- Bike Durham - 11/12/2020
- Partner Agencies (Chapel Hill Transit, GoTriangle, GoDurham, CAMPO) - 11/12/2020

Total Group Contacted

1. Neighborhood Improvement Services
2. CAMPO
3. NCDOT
4. GoDurham
5. GoTriangle
6. Orange County Public Transportation
7. Chapel Hill Transit
8. GoRaleigh
9. North Carolina Central University
10. Duke University
11. Durham Technical Community College
12. University of North Carolina
13. Research Triangle Foundation
14. Durham Chamber of Commerce
15. Downtown Durham Inc.
16. Durham Business and Professional Chain
17. Reality Ministries
18. End Hunger Durham
19. Church World Services
20. Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council (Aidil is on this, do we consider that “reached out to”?)
21. We Are
22. Community Empowerment Fund
23. Sierra Club
24. Durham Congregations in Action
25. Bike Durham
26. The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People
27. Durham County Economic Development
28. Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities
29. Homeless Services Advisory Committee
30. Mayor’s Hispanic/Latino Committee
31. Durham Cooperative Extension

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| 17. Friends of Durham | 44. Urban Ministries |
| 18. Durham Public Schools | 45. Durham Rescue Mission |
| 19. Durham Children's Initiative | 46. Durham CAN |
| 20. Durham For All
People's Alliance | 47. Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People |
| 22. Partnership for a Healthy Durham | 48. El Centro |
| 23. Families Moving Forward | 49. CASA |
| 24. The Coalition for Affordable Housing & Transit | 50. Kyle's Temple AME Zion |
| 25. Durham Women's Commission | 51. El Futuro |
| 26. Durham Human Relations Commission | 52. Senior Housing Authority Residents |
| 27. Hayti Heritage Center | |
| 28. Step Up Durham | |

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

- Invest in full access to the system
- Sidewalks, ADA access, lighting, more amenities and information at the stops
- Focus on access to jobs, commercial areas, schools, grocery stores
- Scenarios should not assume dependency on federal money
- Paratransit
- Improved on time performance and smaller wait times
- Transit investments should be prioritized in BIPOC communities
- There should be more frequent service routes and longer service hours
- More regional connections to Wake County and Orange County
- Direct regional connections to major Durham destinations outside of downtown.
- Need direct and crosstown routes across Durham
- Safety at stops and on the bus
- Improvement of service & customer information and application
- Better on-bus logistics for strollers & bicycles

Stakeholder Interview Notes

Based on conversations you've had with your networks, or personal experience, what are the problems with and barriers to using public transportation in Durham?

- Application is not accurate – people are not able to know if it will be early or late
- Strollers are a challenge – riding the bus and getting to the stop.
- Taking the child out of the stroller is hard. Logistical mess.
- Stops that are not well lit, in a ditch or soft shoulder, not ADA accessible
- PARATRANSIT – strain for disabled to engage in everyday life. Update, enhance and modernize paratransit services / buses / stops / technology.
- Durham business community is evolving to what the future economy will look like
- Critical need for workforce development in growing fields
- Connect workforce to key areas (Durham Tech) Regional connectivity is an important connection for Durham's economy and businesses
- Public Transit has not been popular in the past – appearance, frequency, hours of operation
- Workforce connections must be working for the residents that are here and we are trying to attract RTA Zero fare weekend pilot – what is possible.
- A good place to start. 80% fare revenue comes from weekday service.
- Consider using an equity, inclusion and upward mobility lens
- Zero fare instead of fare free
- Do not ride transit due to a bad experience
- Restaurants – timing of busses do not work with their hours Interest in having a shuttle (kind of like the Bull City Connector)
- Services hotels and museums – does a circuit to key destinations

- Through and into Connector was too big – perceived as public transit
- Graphics hindered sight inside buses which concerned female riders
- Ability to use bikes on buses
- Our current system (busses) treats the users as second class citizens. We make the riders wait in the mud, rain or blazing heat by the side of the road, don't provide nearly enough shelters, and certainly no amenities like seating, wi-fi, and spotty frequency of busses. I believe our goal should be to attract Choice Riders to use public transportation, but seeing the poor experience we create for current Captive Riders (terrible term) we need to make huge leaps in the rider experience that currently exists.
- The buses are very easy to use, but their frequency is not always convenient and the bus stops are just a sign post. No benches (or very few), no shelter, not even a pad. I too often had to walk through mud to get on the bus in Trinity Park. It was/is clearly a low priority
- for the city. The real challenge is if you leave Durham and have to transfer between several buses. Travel time to Chapel Hill, for example, is often 1 1/2hrs each way with 3 transfers.
- Schedules are unreliable enough to make the effort to use it not worth it. For instance, with about a 15-minute headway, if there is (say) 7 minute plus/minus in the
- bus's arrival time, one has to get to the stop 7 minutes early, and I might wait 15 minutes for it. Add the 5-10 minute walk to the bus, 10 minutes or so on the bus, and 5 minutes to the office, and it's a 40-minute commute, longer than walking the 2-3 miles. The TransLoc app (for bus status) is fine and helps some but many say that the app is 'jumpy' and does not always reflect the bus's status right now. Plus one still has to plan for the bus being early even if you can monitor it.
- The 'spoke' system whereby every bus goes through Durham Station on the half hour is also problematic, as some busses are chronically late and some buses leave early (even though they are not supposed to). People have to run to catch their departing connecting buses, and if they miss it (or if the transfer bus left early), the rider may have to wait a half hour minimum. It's difficult to imagine trying to get to a job consistently and having to deal with this everyday.
- Debit cards are constantly not working and have to go to the booth way too often to get a new one. Consensus: experience is very frustrating.
- The biggest thing coming out of conversations with folks that we have met with is about improving bus stops and making them accessible and connected.
- Service Side Frequency of service is mentioned a lot
- More direct access to places throughout Durham (not having to go downtown to get to a final destination, cross-town service, smaller transit centers)
- Extending the service within Durham (especially North Durham around Hebron Rd) and to other localities
- Better regional access to jobs, in particular to and from Morrisville and Cary
- Majority will need access within Durham, but picking up additional, off-peak service to other areas (like Wake County) will be important
- Safety at stops
- Regional connectivity is key – already have good connections within Durham but no direct transit connections outside of Durham
- Support CRT with a good connection to campus
- GoDurham and NCCU shuttle service and stops are not coordinated
- Educational awareness of transit
- Bicycle access, encourage use of bikes on campus
- Sidewalks
- Lighting
- Safety
- Have a security guard trained in racial equity and de-escalation on buses – not a police officer
- Gangs on buses is a major problem
- Cleanliness and sanitation of the buses needs to be addressed
- Accessibility
- Cities with good transit are walkable
- Fare free service for everyone
- More routes that go outside Durham
- Should not have to go downtown for all transfers
- Information
- Provide education on transit in schools
- Better information should be provided at stops Include information on benefits of transit in school curricula (environmental science and civics)
- Use the textline at the City's Office on Youth to disseminate information
- Routes having to go to Durham Station

- Inability to control when things go south, no show or late ACCESS van; because of disabilities people don't know how to interact with people who control things in to get answers, vulnerable population; no other way to access programs; lack of consistency of the transportation, ACCESS vans doesn't seem as scheduled as other public transportation; people weren't picked up or picked up late and other times things go smoothly; when short trips that should take 20 minutes take 3 hours affects folks who may need to go to the bathroom; phone scheduling is tricky, long hold times, online scheduling/tracking system is needed; during COVID, Reality Ministries is not allowing community to use ACCESS because people on buses with a lot of people; people aren't able to come to programming even though they want to
- Online scheduling would reduce calls that Reality Ministries makes to find out about status of trips • Cost of trips being \$4 roundtrip, 3X a week for programming, adds up quickly for people on fixed incomes

What changes can we make to public transportation to improve conditions for the people you work with/serve?

- Having to go out of the way to go to the downtown terminal takes an excessive amount of time – create more direct routes
- Include better resources (application) for transit riders – making it an easier option to choose
- More confident leaving early and walking than taking the bus
- There needs to be a recognition that can be an interesting experience
- Most people typically do not go out and have multiple meetings throughout the day though
- Make trying transit less trying – lost opportunity
- Physical – how to access, mental – do not know how, monetary – make it affordable
- Transit for all people at all times (broader than workforce mobility) 20% of time travelling to work
- Healthcare, shopping, appointments – virtuous experience of transit
- People like the application to know when the bus is coming Improving the areas where people wait for buses
- There is not a consistent look for them (bus stops) • Not standing in the mud
- Everyone likes the new Durham Station – Is there a way to make it a mass transit center? Could it accommodate CRT?
- Hard cross over from Amtrack to Durham Station
- All of the issues/amenities listed above, as well as a bigger investment in direct routes and frequency. Also, the biggest improvement would be to go to a fare free system (such as Chapel Hill enjoys). One of the biggest hurdles to attract Choice Riders is the uncertainty of how to pay, and of other riders the price point. The Bull City Connector was an early experiment in this, with a simple route (Main Street) initially frequent headways (15 minutes when it first started) and fare free. The BCR was a big success for the first year or so, but cuts to frequency and the lack of an ongoing marketing campaign beyond the first year eventually killed it.
- Based upon the above notes, I think shorter headways and more rigorous on-time performance. One rider also mentioned that it would be good if there was a faster way to load wheelchair passengers – they often use the bus and it takes several minutes for the driver to load and unload these folks which can throw a serious (and unpredictable wrench) into the schedule.
- What are additional improvements or items should our team be thinking about? How long does it take to get to places – now and in the future? How will changes to the Transit Plan impact how they will access schools, employment areas and other areas faster and easier?
- Expanding how long the service runs
- Community meetings may run too late for participants to return home afterwards
- Access and conditions of the stops
- Lighting, covering
- Customer information – when is the next stop coming?
- Digital signs at stations
- Improved application to increase reliability
- Behavior of the other transit riders/customers and operators of the buses YLP also mentioned how it feels dangerous to be on the regular bus
- If there are no safe places, it doesn't matter how nice the transit infrastructure is
- Transit Scenarios: Include bus only which meets the same demands as CRT with only bus service
- Reliability – think about it as an ongoing problem when in mixed traffic
- Often reliability changes occur once and must be fixed again as it degrades
- Online scheduling for ACCESS
- Free for the people who currently ride the bus, a lot more riders on her route (4, 6, 11, 10) even during COVID because bus is free
- Sliding scale costs for low-income people; ACCESS serves people who don't own a car and people who have family members who work and can't drive them, so some folks may still be able to pay

- Turnover of drivers causes problems with ACCESS with drivers not knowing routes or not knowing how to manage the dynamics on the bus, pay drivers more for retention
- Number of people on ACCESS van, if something went wrong, what would the driver do without another support person? It would be great if there was a companion person on ACCESS vans, to be there for support if someone is having a crisis
- Uber-type service for people with disabilities

What are specific transit improvements that can be done to enhance transit for Durham Tech students?

- GoPasses have helped improve access Service improvements between Orange County and Duke Street North campuses and main campus
- Better coordinating the bus schedule and class schedule
- Some students do not take classes due to transportation challenges
- A vanpool may be a potential solution Team has begun analysis on zip codes of students and travel behavior
- Evening frequency is typically once every hour which is particularly difficult for students

In order to improve conditions for the people you work with, what is more important and why?

- Easier, more convenient travel within Durham
- Easier, more convenient travel between Raleigh, Chapel Hill, and other places in the region?
- More difficult to get out of town to other places and the airport.
- Traveling to Raleigh is a very long commute and requires transfers – Imagine a lot of folks would use that
- Out of town paratransit is problematic to schedule for commuting to work – GoDurham/GoTriangle
- ACCESS is difficult to coordinate - can take up to 3 hours to get home/to work – this could be remedied if on-demand service could be incorporating
- Dependent on who you're talking to
 - Local workers – local travel
 - Office tenants – travel between Wake/Orange
- Desire for a Park and Ride to get to downtown – high visibility, security watch, adequate facilities/equipment and maintenance
- Service must run late enough for service workers and visitors
- Easier, more convenient travel within Durham? - Yes. Convenient to the point that my coworkers could actually ride the bus to locations in Durham without an unreasonable delay over what a car trip would take. I would be happy to end up paying for fewer parking rentals downtown, and instead buy bus passes instead. We are still a long way from that.
- It really depends on your personal circumstances, but most say this is the priority. Get local done right, then expand on that.
- Travel within Durham, not as many people on GoTriangle buses
- Within Durham where jobs are
- Take system we have and improve it instead of making it broader, better way to focus

What changes can we make to our public transportation system to serve Durham as it grows?

- Looking at transportation as a full mobility system – how do buses/sidewalks/slow streets/ bike lanes interact in concert not independently of each other - full ecosystem
- Remove the assumption that there are two cars in every garage – thinking about everyone – car-centric
- Fayetteville St Transit Corridor – looked at transportation more holistically.
- What can be done to make buses move faster?
- 1995 Comprehensive Plan that focused on channeling transportation in certain corridors – did not have the intended outcomes – how was the community engaged in developing that plan?
- Get away from hub system
- Look at cities of our size that have done well and cities that have not done well
- Campaign, public transportation seen as for marginalized/poor people, overcome mental barrier and change the way people think about public transportation (public transportation is clean, organized, good for the environment, etc.)
- Creative, flexible solutions, opportunities for all members of the community; get someone to an affordable house in a safe neighborhood but still get them to a job if they don't drive, mix of Uber, ACCESS, and bus line that is affordable on a sliding scale for everyone
- Fast, fun, free

What is your experience with public transportation in Durham and the Triangle? Do you work with or serve residents that rely on public transportation to get around?

- A GoDurham and GoTriangle Transit Rider
- Primarily works with transit riders, hears about experiences from the people served by Reality Ministries
- Uses the bus on occasion, if she has to take her car into the shop, buses are not easy to navigate and takes a long time to get where you are going, a lot of walking involved; also works with people who use public transportation because they don't own a car; hub and spoke model results in longer trip and people walking in dangerous conditions (along train tracks); frustrated about how the routes are set up
- Started taking bus in 2009 when she gave up her car, bus stop near her house, about 30 minutes to work at Duke, initially faced resistance to her being on the bus as a white rider; have tried to recruit co-workers to ride the bus and people say bus doesn't go where they need to go or takes too much time

Which of the following transit investments has the potential to be most beneficial for your organization/committee/group?

- a) bus rapid transit – fast, frequent, high-capacity bus service along major corridors (off board fare payment and “stations”)
 - b) commuter rail connecting Durham with Raleigh and Garner
- Concerned about accessibility of commuter rail and supporting people with disabilities, but sees the value of commuter rail for distances; many of people she works with don't really travel outside of Durham
 - People who come to Reality probably won't use either of these
 - BRT most interesting to riders we serve; hard to think of where you would put it in Durham
 - Less infrastructure with commuter rail, Raleigh to Durham or Durham to Chapel Hill? we should go where the demand is

Miscellaneous - Discussion which did not fall under any of the above questions.

- YLP – December 2nd meeting - YLP report coming soon
- Most important things for our team to know: Make sure the scenarios include something we can deliver and that our regional transit future and Durham transit future is not dependent on federal funding and grants. Is there an early win scenario that we can accomplish.
- There needs to be better coordination between planning efforts – there are a lot of emails/notifications being sent for different plans.
- While we are trying to be more equitable, community members may not be able to understand all of the components of the plan/planning process and its impact on Durham into the future.
- Information on plans must be more accessible and given greater explanation
- Bringing a professionally critical assessment to any proposed changes, particularly to the rider experience as they wait for and get off the bus (or other)
- Regional connectivity is a major need – GoDurham already serves NCCU well to reach points in the City of Durham. CRT can be a major component of this.
- Not a lot of food and shopping options near campus. Transit is key for students to reach these needs.
- Bus stop improvements and coordination between GoDurham and NCCU shuttle are major needs.
- Connections to RTP, Chapel Hill, and Raleigh are important for students and faculty.
- Provide education on how to use transit
- Safety is a concern – must make sure transit is safe.
- Safety is #1 issue
- Need better pedestrian accessibility to bus stops
- Lack of access to suburban areas needs to be addressed
- Need better information/education
- Spread info about GoPasses and Youth Passes
- Provide better and up-to-date information at bus stops
- Transit is a major priority for Durham Tech – over 500 riders a day
- More direct connection to the Orange County campus is key – transit is currently not a viable option
- Run the ODX more often and for more of the day and have it come to Durham Tech without a transfer
- GoDurham evening frequency is an issue – needs to be no more than 15 minutes
- BRT corridors are more appropriate than CRT for Durham Tech
- Provide direct routes to grocery stores, Walmart, etc. This can be solved by getting started the senior shuttle that has already been funded.
- GoDurham Access is consistently late and getting less reliable.
- The \$4 round trip for seniors is expensive.

- Rats running around Durham Station
 - Buses are cramped, overcrowded
 - Need security on the buses (“I got my neck slashed by a GoDurham rider”)
 - The limiting of the number of bags on the bus is difficult for those who need the bus for shopping
 - Walkers are difficult to fold and get on the bus
 - Non-handicapped riders use the handicapped seats
 - Poorly maintained sidewalks around the bus stops
 - Stops are too far away from senior living centers
 - Pick people up in the middle of housing complexes
 - Make it easier to exit at the back of the bus
 - Kyle Cavanaugh is the VP at Duke overseeing transit
 - Duke’s priority is a sophisticated internal (to Duke) transit system that connects to whatever Durham does
 - The Bull City Connector is not on Duke’s radar for the future and wasn’t a good investment
 - Kyle Cavanaugh will provide information and reach out to us
 - General feedback on conducting engagement: Making sure that flyers are more attention grabbing, as folks are seeing them on the bus may not know what a Transit Plan or Engage Durham is
 - Making sure that materials are visual to help with folks who may not be literate
 - Locations where we might go to talk to people (Councilmember Pierce Freelon: Beauty salons and barber shops, place where people have time to talk)
 - I also provided further clarification about the Engagement Ambassador process and some of our in-person engagement
 - Ensure that black residents are represented in the plan, provided opportunities, and given access to transit Public transportation needs to get black residents to work on time be affordable
1. Any committee groups enacting any part of the Transit Plan must have at least 40 percent Black representation.
 2. There must be 40 percent Black representation fulfilling the low-, mid-, and high-level responsibilities within that committee or group.
 3. There must be 40 percent representation of Black businesses in any commercial development contracts awarded to complete any parts of the Transit Plan. For non-Black owned businesses, their employment must incorporate 40 percent Black representation.
 - Why: Durham has a 40 percent black population. Thus, our 40 percent must be represented in every single social and economic aspect of Durham.
 4. All fiscal budgets of the Transit Plan must be directed toward low-income Black populations first. Not last, but first. This will be most visible in the formation of greenways; bus stops; sidewalks; and ridesharing that will transport lower income Black neighborhoods directly to high-wage jobs in RTP, Downtown Durham, on 15-501, Cary, and Raleigh. We also ask that the Bull City Connector free rides return and service transportation to 15-501, Angier Street, East Main Street, Duke Hospital, and all City and County buildings.
 - Why: We must combat the practices of trickle-down economics. It is also the responsibility of the majority to protect the interest of the minority. Thus, Durham’s agencies should structure ourselves to lift from the bottom!
 5. The Durham Transit Plan must increase the wages and improve the benefit structure, including retirement and health plans, of Black transit drivers to be comparable with Durham’s cost of living.
 - Why: The majority of transit drivers and riders are from low-income Black populations.
 6. There must be investment in electric transportation to minimize the financial cost and environmental effects of oil and fossil fuel driven transportation.
 - Why: We are products of our environments. Thus, we must prioritize our environment’s optimization to support true physical and mental health.
 7. Late-night transportation services must be increased to service people that work second and third-shift jobs.
 8. Street lighting and walking pathways must be increased and improved in low-income neighborhoods.
 9. Bus routes and other transportation routes must be designed to direct communities to local Black-owned business areas.
 10. Any transit effort that will displace any Black community from economic empowerment must be eliminated.
 11. Systems must be created to establish more frequent bus routes, preferably every fifteen minutes, and to hold the transit system accountable to timely departures and arrivals.
 - Why: These systematic changes will help Black people increase their income while minimizing their cost of transportation.

Would you want cross-town service more versus regional transportation? Would CRT, BRT or local bus benefit Durham Tech?

- Depends on routes Cutting down on headways is very important
- If bus rapid transit is in high traffic areas with lots of DT students, it is very important Student access is of greatest importance opposed to professor/staff access
- As rents increase, students may have to move farther out which should also be considered
- Within Durham, increase frequency of routes
- Provision of GoPasses needs to continue
- Loss of transit access to North Campus restricts the offerings that can be made there – this should be reinstated It is very difficult, if not prohibitive, for Orange County students to access the main campus in Durham • Headway reduction is important if transit is going to where students are
- Majority of students use GoDurham for transit.
- No current GoTriangle direct service. 70% of students are coming from Durham or Orange (some are coming from Wake) More emphasis on connecting to Orange County – more local transit In order to get to campus, there are many complications and transfers required
- With light rail, were there bus stops which mimicked what was going to occur?
- There would be one additional transfer to get to Duke and one additional transfer to get to UNC