



# Residents Guide to Transportation

The N.C. Department of Transportation's Guide to Transportation Decision Making in Your Community



Connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina

Transportation plays a fundamental role in communities across North Carolina. North Carolina's transportation system carries people and goods across the state to their destinations. The multimodal transportation infrastructure in North Carolina helps travelers, the economy, and the overall well-being of the state by providing a comprehensive statewide transportation system that includes all forms of travel. From highways, airports, trains, ferries, public transportation or pedestrian/bicycle facilities, the comprehensive, multimodal system allows North Carolina's citizens to connect to:



No matter where in North Carolina you live or what mode of transportation you use, YOU are able to help define your community's transportation priorities and share your ideas about what best serves your community.

*Multi-modal transportation refers to a system in which users have the ability to use more than one way of traveling, such as by car, bus, bike, ferry, walking, train or plane.*

## This guide will help you:



Get involved in a meaningful way in the process of making transportation decisions in your community, region and state



Take a proactive approach to improving transportation in your community



Get involved early and often



Learn who to contact and when



Understand how transportation is planned, funded, designed, built and maintained

# PART 1

## How an Idea Becomes a Transportation Project

### WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION?

- The process of making transportation decisions
- Why it's important to get involved early
- The key aspects of each phase

Public input is a vital part of the project development process. This section shows you the transportation decision-making process in seven basic phases. These will help you understand what activities and decisions help move a project from an idea to a reality. It is important to get involved with a project early and often. Public input is the fuel that drives a project forward. Be a voice in your community by understanding the processes in place to make sure projects meet the needs of the area.

- **PLANNING:** How decisions are made about which projects are planned for the future, or for future development.
- **PROGRAMMING:** How transportation projects are prioritized to receive funding.
- **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT:** How potential alternatives are studied and chosen.
- **DESIGN:** How ideas are turned into transportation projects.
- **PROPERTY ACQUISITION:** How NCDOT purchases any land needed for projects.
- **CONSTRUCTION:** How transportation projects are built.
- **MAINTENANCE:** How NCDOT maintains projects once they are built.

Transportation agencies are required to provide public involvement opportunities and reach out to people like you. But you don't have to wait for them to take the first step. In this toolkit, find out about NCDOT's transportation decision-making process and ways that you can influence transportation decisions at each step of the process.

## NCDOT Highway Divisions

North Carolina is divided into 14 regions – referred to as highway divisions – in which the NCDOT's Division of Highways distributes the duties of building and maintaining state-owned bridges and highways.

Each region has an office – referred to as a division office – that receives support from various sections and units within the Division of Highways. Each Division is headed by a Division Engineer.

You can find out who your Division Engineer is by visiting this website  
[www.ncdot.gov/divisions/highways/Pages/divisions.aspx](http://www.ncdot.gov/divisions/highways/Pages/divisions.aspx)



# NCDOT Project Process | Seven Phases



# PART 2

## Some Transportation Decisions

### WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION?

- Common transportation decisions and how they are made
- The agencies involved in the transportation planning process and what they do
- Types of transportation plans
- What is environmental justice and why it is important

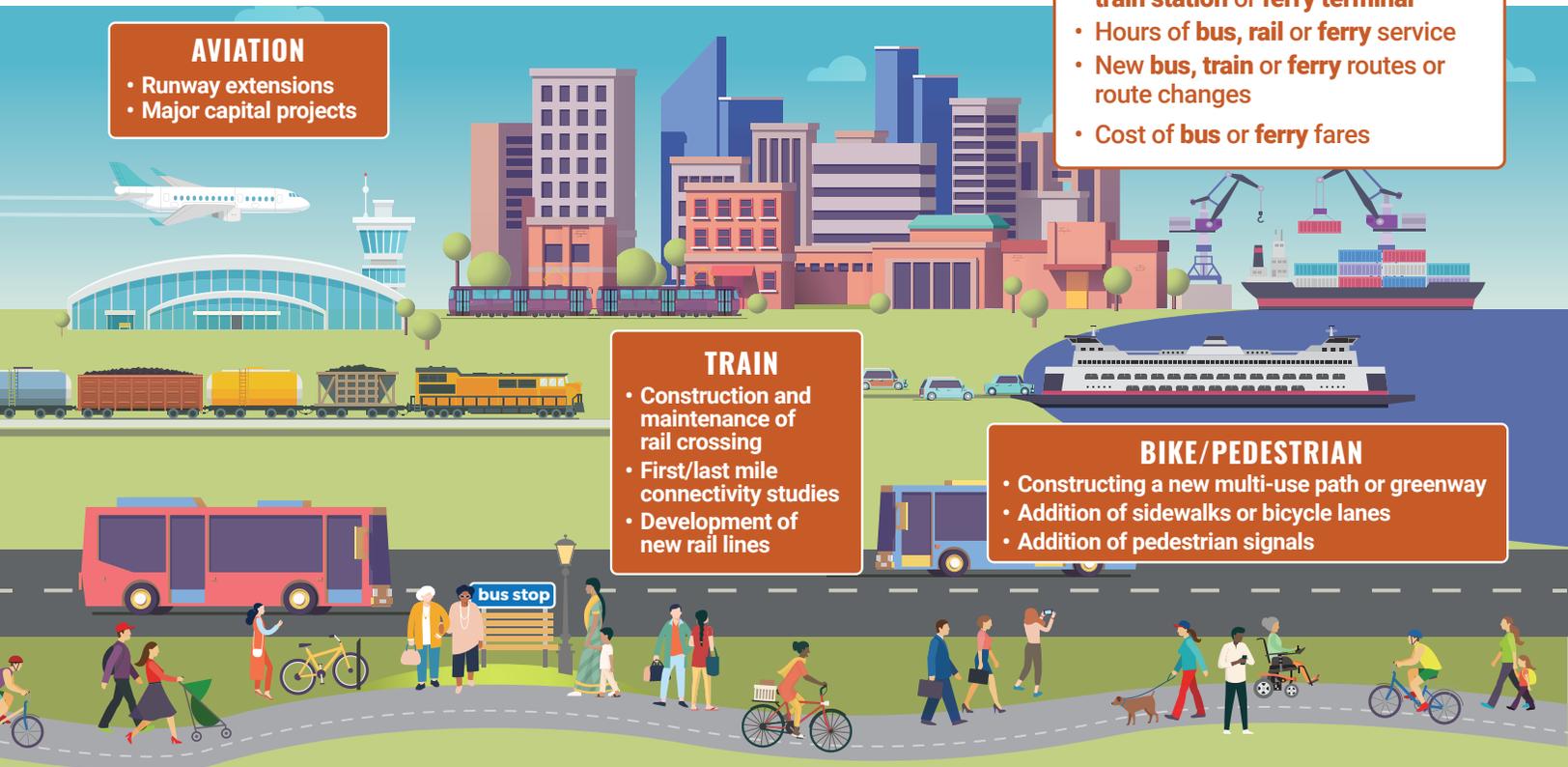
Getting involved at the local, regional, and state level can give you the opportunity to provide feedback at different steps of a project. The chart below gives an overview of different types of transportation plans and which level of agency (local, regional, or state) is involved.

### Examples of decisions made about roads



- Location, design and construction of a new roadway
- Widen a roadway
- Repave or rehabilitate a roadway
- Maintain a roadway

### Examples of decisions made about other modes of transportation



#### AVIATION

- Runway extensions
- Major capital projects

- Location and design of a bus stop, train station or ferry terminal
- Hours of bus, rail or ferry service
- New bus, train or ferry routes or route changes
- Cost of bus or ferry fares

#### TRAIN

- Construction and maintenance of rail crossing
- First/last mile connectivity studies
- Development of new rail lines

#### BIKE/PEDESTRIAN

- Constructing a new multi-use path or greenway
- Addition of sidewalks or bicycle lanes
- Addition of pedestrian signals

## Agencies Involved in the Transportation Planning Process

NCDOT is the state agency responsible for transportation infrastructure in North Carolina. NCDOT has modal divisions dedicated to multiple ways of travel including:



Aviation



Rail



Ferry



Highways



Public Transportation



Bicycle and Pedestrian



State Ports



Freight

*Part of the Integrated Mobility Division*

In North Carolina, NCDOT, regional agencies and local agencies all make transportation decisions and you can get involved at each level of these transportation decisions.

NCDOT is responsible for building and maintaining North Carolina's state-maintained transportation system. Types of projects include building new roadways, expanding existing transit services and replacing bridges. NCDOT has proposed, planned and on-going projects across the entire state of North Carolina.

Local and regional agencies are a great place to make your voice heard about important transportation decisions in your community. These agencies provide a point of contact for you to get involved and truly shape the transportation system in your area and throughout the state. NCDOT relies on the priorities of local and regional agencies to help prioritize the list of projects that will be funded.

### Local Governments

Local agencies are an important part of the transportation process. Municipalities and transit agencies often develop their own plans and fund projects, for which your input is also needed. These projects can range from roadway improvements on local streets to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure or proposed transit improvements. If you notice an issue or problem, reach out to your local planner or engineer to discuss your concern with them. You can also visit your local municipality's or transit agency's website to find out how to you can get involved.

### Regional Transit Agencies

NC is unique in that all 100 counties are served by some form of transit. Transit agencies have their own projects and planning processes that provide opportunities for public input. Find your local transit provider here: [www.ncdot.gov/divisions/public-transit/Pages/local-transit-search.aspx](http://www.ncdot.gov/divisions/public-transit/Pages/local-transit-search.aspx).

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Transportation by bus, rail (commuter or light), ferry or other transport, either publicly or privately owned, which is provided to the public or specialty service, on a regular and continuing basis.

## Regional Agencies

### Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

In North Carolina, there are 19 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). MPOs represent urban areas of 50,000 or more residents and are organizations that make transportation plans and policies at the regional level. They must have a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive ("3C") transportation planning process. MPOs have the responsibility for making decisions about federal transportation funding. MPOs provide the following services:

- Develop long-range plans, called Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTP) and Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP)
- Conduct their own studies about transportation needs
- Develop and prioritize projects the region believes should be included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Rely on public input to help guide transportation decisions in and around your community

To find a MPO in your area click here: [www.ncampo.org/mpos/](http://www.ncampo.org/mpos/).

## COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANS (CTP) & METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANS (MTP)

Both CTPs and MTPs are long-range transportation plans that incorporate all modes of transportation, including transit, bicycle, pedestrian, rail, aviation, ports and ferries. These plans have a 20-year minimum planning horizon, but may forecast out 25 to 30 years in the future. CTPs are developed for MPOs and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs). They are needs-based plans that identify future project proposals needed to meet identified needs in the planning time frame. MTPs are only required for MPOs. They must be updated every four to five years and are fiscally-constrained, meaning only projects that can reasonably be expected to be funded within the planning period are included.

## Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs)

In North Carolina, RPOs serve the counties not represented by the MPOs. Like MPOs, RPOs help to guide the transportation planning process and provide opportunities for public participation. RPOs provide the following services:

- Coordinate, assist and develop local and regional plans including Comprehensive Transportation Plans, and bicycle, pedestrian and greenway plans
- Provide a forum for public participation in the transportation planning and implementation process

- Develop and prioritize projects the organization believes should be included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Provide transportation related information to local governments and the public

To find the RPO in your area click here: [www.ncarpo.org/about-us.html](http://www.ncarpo.org/about-us.html).

## Types of Transportation Plans

Getting involved at the local, regional and state level can give you the opportunity to provide feedback at different steps of the processes, plans and projects. The chart below gives an overview of different types of transportation plans and which agency (local, regional, or state) is involved.

### Which Agencies Manage Which Plans

TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION PLAN



\*TIPs are a subset of the STIP, at the regional level. RPO's are involved in the development of the TIP but do not manage it.

## Equity and Civil Rights in the Transportation Decision-Making Process

There are laws and authorities that protect you from discrimination in transportation decisions.

Civil rights laws and policies ensure that decision-makers—including those in transportation—consider the needs of all, including groups that have historically been underrepresented and underserved by past and current transportation programs, facilities or services. This includes racial and ethnic communities, low-income communities and people with disabilities.

- **Title VI / Nondiscrimination** is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin. This applies to any project that receives federal funding.
- **Environmental Justice (EJ)** is an executive order (No. 12898) rooted in Title VI that directs agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse environmental and health impacts on low-income populations, and racial and ethnic communities.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and ensures equal opportunity and access for this community. Accessible transportation systems further the goal of independence for people with disabilities.
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** is an Executive Order (No. 13116) that prohibits discrimination based on national origin by ensuring that individuals who do not speak English as their primary language may receive language assistance in order to have meaningful access to government programs and activities.

For more information about these policies, visit [www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/access-for-all/nondiscrimination-program/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/access-for-all/nondiscrimination-program/Pages/default.aspx)

## How you can get involved in Equity and Civil Rights for Transportation Projects

### Title VI

### Environmental Justice

### Americans with Disabilities Act

### Limited English Proficiency

#### WHAT ARE AGENCIES REQUIRED TO PROVIDE?

- Title VI plan to outline the agency's requirements, roles, method of administration and analysis
- Notice to the public of upcoming projects and methods to participate

- Meaningful public participation

- Accessible buildings, buses, trains, sidewalks and more
- When agencies provide transportation options, they must be accessible for persons with disabilities
- Equity during participation

- LEP Plan outlining reasonable steps to serve and communicate effectively with LEP populations
- Notice to the public of upcoming projects and methods to participate
- Translations of materials and interpreters at public meetings

#### WHERE CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

- At meetings/events when governmental organizations do transportation planning
- At public meetings for projects affecting your community
- Contact the agency

- At public meetings for projects affecting your community
- Contact the agency

- Through state of local disability councils
- At public meetings for projects affecting your community
- Contact the agency

- At public meetings for projects affecting your community
- Contact the agency



If you feel that a project discriminates or is lacking accessibility, you can file a complaint with the local, state or federal agency

# PART 3

## Becoming a Transportation Leader in your Community

You can get involved at many points in the transportation planning process — and getting involved early and often is best. Some routine and emergency repair projects can move quickly, while other more complex projects may need significant planning and phased funding. Recognize that your involvement may need to take place over months or even years it can take to proceed from a plan to a project.

- Find out where public meetings are announced and held in your community, and to sign up for information updates and opportunities for involvement.
  - Visit: [www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings/Pages/default.aspx).
- Follow news about transportation issues and stay informed.
  - Follow NCDOT and your local transportation agencies' social media pages for updates and sign up to receive newsletters or emails.
- Attend a public meeting and provide feedback.
- Look for ways to provide comments online or in person by visiting a transportation agency's website.
- Contact elected officials and staff at your local and state transportation agencies.
- Work with your neighbors. Find out if anyone in your neighborhood is interested in the same transportation issues as you.
- Find out if there is an advisory group, commission or committee that deals with transportation in your area, and find out how to apply to be appointed.
- If you notice a safety problem, notify the responsible agency right away. This agency might be your local government, transit agency or NCDOT. NCDOT allows you to report issues, like potholes or malfunctioning traffic lights, on their website: [www.ncdot.gov/contact/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ncdot.gov/contact/Pages/default.aspx).
- Before purchasing real estate, check with your local planning and zoning office to learn about future transportation projects planned in your area.

### WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION?

- What steps you can take to become a transportation leader in your community
- The steps of public involvement
- What to do if you don't get the outcome you want
- Important links and contact information

## Public Involvement

**When the public is involved in a transportation plan or project, the agency is responsible providing opportunity for engagement by interested groups in the community. This includes:**



- Racial and ethnic
- Low literacy
- Low-income
- Disabilities
- Older adults and younger people
- Tribal government
- Limited English Proficiency
- Immigrant and refugee

**Effective engagement includes a combination of written and non-written communication, such as:**



- Graphics and mapping tools to allow you to visualize information
- Personal interviews and audio/video recordings to gather your input

NCDOT examples: Attending local events (NC Moves 2050 Plan), Smartboards, online engagement platforms and project visualizations



**NCDOT makes materials available two weeks in advance for project development for the majority of projects.**

**Agencies should hold meetings and hearings in places where the community naturally gathers that are:**



- Accessible to people with disabilities and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Able to accommodate assistance for those with visual or auditory disabilities
- Conveniently located
- Reachable by transit and paratransit
- Additionally, agencies can host virtual meetings and use digital engagement methods



### Right to Language Access (RTL)

People who do not speak English, or have a limited ability to read, speak or understand English, can receive interpreting services upon request by calling **1-800-481-6494**. This statement is placed on all meeting/outreach notifications

## What if you don't get the outcome you want?

Even after going through the public involvement process, some projects may not be built or an alternative that you did not like might be chosen for construction. There are several factors that are involved in the process including safety, funding, design constraints, available right-of-way, utility constraints, environmental considerations, etc.

When the process does not yield the result you want:

- Speak to the planner, the project manager or the public involvement representative at the transportation agency. They can help you to better understand why the decision was made and how you can be involved in the next project or plan.
- Get involved early for future projects.
- Stay encouraged and encourage others to stay in the process.



## Important Links / Contact Information



You can find out about NCDOT's current long range studies here:  
[www.ncdot.gov/projects/Pages/long-range-studies.aspx](http://www.ncdot.gov/projects/Pages/long-range-studies.aspx)

You can find out about upcoming NCDOT public meetings here:  
[www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ncdot.gov/news/public-meetings/Pages/default.aspx)

Find your local MPO here . . . . . [www.ncampo.org/mpos/](http://www.ncampo.org/mpos/)

Find your local RPO here. . . . . [www.ncarpo.org/about-us.html](http://www.ncarpo.org/about-us.html)

USDOT Departmental Office for Civil Rights . . . . .  
[www.transportation.gov/civil-rights](http://www.transportation.gov/civil-rights)  
[www.ncdot.gov/about-us/board-offices/offices/civil-rights](http://www.ncdot.gov/about-us/board-offices/offices/civil-rights)

Phone: 202-366-4648

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) . . . . . [www.faa.gov/](http://www.faa.gov/)  
Phone: 866-835-5322

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) . . . . . [railroads.dot.gov](http://railroads.dot.gov)  
Phone: 202-366-4000

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) . . . . . [www.transit.dot.gov/](http://www.transit.dot.gov/)  
Phone: 202-366-4043

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) . . [www.highways.dot.gov](http://www.highways.dot.gov)  
Phone: 202-366-4000

Place local contact information here





For more information contact:  
**Environmental Analysis Unit**  
919-707-6000  
1598 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

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