



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Workshop on Alternative Transportation in RTP

November 11, 2008

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Research Triangle Park Headquarters, 12 Davis Drive

Moderator:

John Hodges-Copple, Planning Director, Triangle J Council of Governments

Hosted by:

SmartCommute@rtp, Alison Fiori, Director, @rtp Programs (fiori@rtp.org, 919.549.8181)

Triangle Transit, Emily Yasukochi, Transit Service Planner (eyasukochi@triangletransit.org, 919.485.7479)

Workshop Attendance:

- Bayer CropScience (1)
- Cisco (2)
- Credit Suisse (5)
- Eisai (1)
- EMC (1)
- Fidelity (1)
- IBM (3)
- NetApp (1)
- Nortel (3)
- RTI International (8)
- Underwriters Laboratories (1)
- US EPA (1)
- US Forest Service/NCSU (1)

Workshop Overview

Twenty-nine individuals representing thirteen companies and organizations in The Research Triangle Park attended the Workshop on Alternative Transportation in RTP. Four staff members from the Research Triangle Foundation, seven staff members from Triangle Transit, and one member of the Triangle Transit Board of Trustees also participated. Individuals were assigned to tables to ensure a mix of employer representation at each table. A Triangle Transit staff member was assigned to each table to act as a scribe.

Emily Yasukochi of Triangle Transit gave a brief overview of the background and purpose of the workshop (see Appendix).

John Hodges-Copple opened the workshop with small group discussion among the participants at each table to generate ideas about improving alternative transportation in the Park. Triangle Transit staff members at each table recorded their group's ideas. The participants generated more than 250 individual ideas during the small group discussion.

At the end of small group discussion, Hodges-Copple identified several categories of improvements and asked the participants to share their ideas for each category.

Most of the ideas and suggestions fell under one of the following categories:

- Incentives
- Transit
- Outreach/Education
- Bicycle
- Vanpool/Shared vehicles
- Auto/Carpool
- Bus stops
- Pedestrian
- Land Use
- Planning
- Customer service

While the organization of ideas and suggestions by category was useful during the workshop to further develop some of the ideas and to discover which ideas came up more than once, this summary of the workshop findings is organized by type of action to be taken (if any) on each of the ideas and suggestions generated.

I. Suggestions for UNC-CH City and Regional Planning student workshop

- Use employer fleet vehicles for Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program
- Use alternative fuel vehicles for ERH program – employer or collectively provided
- Express bus service from park-and-ride location to specific Park company/companies or new RTP transit hub
- All-day trolley/shuttle service in RTP
 - Within RTP/company to company
 - Company to services (lunch, bank, etc.)
- Satellite transit hubs near employment clusters in RTP, e.g., Cisco/NetApp/Credit Suisse or EPA/NIEHS
- High-frequency shuttles from hub to specific employer or cluster of employers
- Employer-provided fare-free shuttle service in RTP
- Expand hours of service later into night using new funding source (e.g., employers, RTF)
- Demand-response service during weekday mid-day using new funding source (e.g., employers, RTF)
- Add shelters and schedule information to more bus stop locations in RTP using new funding source (e.g., employers, RTF)
- Loaner/rental bike hubs in RTP at shuttle stops
- Loaner/rental scooters
- Use of golf carts on RTP trail system
- Shared use vehicles stationed at transit hub for last mile transport (e.g., Seattle Metro Vanshare program); could be provided by employer or transit agency or RTP
- Zipcars located at transit hub and employer locations
- Employer or collectively-provided vehicles for all-day use
- Employer-administered vanpool program
- Employer-provided shuttles within large campuses, e.g. IBM, Cisco
- Employers charge for parking/parking cash out
- Carpool staging areas plus flexible carpool matching tool (web-based), e.g., www.flexiblecarpooling.org, www.goosenetworks.com, www.goloco.org, www.letsagggle.com, www.icarpool.com; or program, e.g., Northern Virginia Slugline

II. Suggestions already available or in progress (with responses)

Suggestion	Triangle Transit/SmartCommute@rtp Response
Route transit down roads where major employers are located	Triangle Transit provides bus service to the main roads in RTP: Davis Dr, TW Alexander Dr (western portion), Cornwallis Rd, Kit Creek Rd. Prior to the Transit Center relocation, we provided by-request service to employers on the north section of TW Alexander Dr; however, this service was rarely used and discontinued due to the increased distance to the new Regional Transit Center.
Shuttle between old and new transit centers	Triangle Transit provides all-day service between the new transit center and NC 54 at Park Drive, a few hundred feet from the old transit center.
Have buses turn off engine at transit center; close doors when waiting to conserve A/C and heat	Triangle Transit's older vehicles cannot be turned off when waiting at the platform because of mechanical issues. However, our policy for our newer Gillig vehicles is that they should be shut off if waiting for more than five minutes. It is also our policy to only open rear doors when passengers are exiting the bus, so they should be closed after passengers have deboarded and buses are waiting. If a passenger observes that these policies are not being abided, s/he should note the bus number (shown in the interior front and exterior rear of the bus), date, and time of the occurrence and report it to 485-RIDE or fill out an on-line customer feedback form at www.triangletransit.org/contact/feedback . This will allow operations supervisors to address the issue with the specific bus operator not observing the policy.
Emergency Ride Home (ERH) advertising campaign	ERH information is disseminated at all SmartCommute@rtp tabling events, in New Hire Packets, which are distributed free of charge to RTP companies to distribute during training sessions, and at kiosks located throughout the campuses of RTP companies; staff will look into ways to put greater focus on promoting the ERH benefit.
Education for HR departments on tax benefits/subsidies	Triangle Transit hosted an event in RTP for employers to learn about pre-tax benefits for transit in October 2008. Once redesigned, the SmartCommute@rtp website, www.smartcommute.org , will provide more information on this topic.
Google Transit	Triangle Transit has applied for grant funds to purchase scheduling software that would allow us to utilize Google Transit. If funding is awarded, this project would be implemented in Fiscal Year 2010 (July 2009-June 2010).
Marketing sheet to show economic benefits of using alternative transportation to individuals	GoTriangle.org, the on-line resource for alternative transportation information in the Triangle region, has a feature for calculating savings from using alternative transportation. Staff will work to promote potential savings from using alternative transportation and will consider creating materials to further advertise and promote economic benefits of using alternative transportation.

II. Suggestions already available or in progress (with responses), cont.

Suggestion	Triangle Transit/SmartCommute@rtp Response
Market existing incentives	The SmartCommute@rtp website is currently being redesigned, and will put greater emphasis on commuting benefits offered by RTP employers. However, that information is available today at www.smartcommute.org . Staff will continue to work with Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETCs) to assist with marketing efforts within each company, but it is ultimately up to each company to determine the amount of resources dedicated to offering and marketing alternative commuting benefits.
E-mail program to notify travelers of traffic incidents and other travel conditions that affect one's commute	Triangle Transit has a Rider Alert program in place, which is used to notify registrants of upcoming service changes, detours, cases of extreme delay due to traffic incidents, etc. via e-mail. Staff will work to promote this program so that it reaches a larger audience. The challenge with any type of e-mail notification is that its reach will always be limited to those who register for the service. Once redesigned, www.smartcommute.org will have a direct link to traffic information and cameras.
Bicycle hub at transit center	This spring, Triangle Transit will initiate the Blue Urban Bike (BUB) program (www.recyclery.info/blue_urban_bikes) at the Regional Transit Center. Initially, three BUBs will be available for check out to registered members of the BUB program. If there is enough demand, more BUBs will be added.
Bike route sharing on website	This is available on www.GoTriangle.org . Staff will work to make the service more visible and investigate an interactive component. There is also a listserv for bicycle and pedestrian issues in RTP. Please visit http://lists.ibiblio.org/mailman/listinfo/rtp_bike_ped to join this listserv (moderated by SmartCommute@rtp).
Add vans to the vanpool program	Triangle Transit will add up to 20 vehicles to the vanpool program by the end of FY 2009.
Add shelters to more bus stop locations in RTP	New bus shelters were added in the fall of 2008 in the southern portion of RTP on Kit Creek at Cisco and on Louis Stephens at Cisco. Shelters currently not being used due to the move of the transfer center will be refurbished and relocated to stops where ridership warrants a shelter (NetApp on Kit Creek and Credit Suisse on Louis Stephens among others). Funding for shelters is provided by the Service District - the special tax district to which RTP companies pay certain taxes. This item was also added to the list of suggestions for the UNC Department of City and Regional Planning (DCRP) workshop to consider.

II. Suggestions already available or in progress (with responses), cont.

Suggestion	Triangle Transit/SmartCommute@rtp Response
Place schedule information at all stops; include customer service phone number and route numbers on bus stop signs	Triangle Transit plans to install new bus stop signs system-wide in the coming months. The new signs will include route number and destination information and the phone number for customer service. Triangle Transit also plans to add schedule information at many bus stops over the next several years, but the stops are prioritized in order of use; those stops with the highest number of daily boardings will have schedule information posted. We have to limit the provision of this amenity because we do not have the resources to maintain schedule holder hardware and information at each of our bus stops (Triangle Transit serves over 600 bus stops in Wake, Durham, and Orange Counties). However, this item was also added to the list of suggestions for the DCRP workshop for review of alternate funding sources.
Add security phone/alert systems at bus stops	Triangle Transit’s Regional Transit Center will have an emergency phone installed. It is not financially feasible to add emergency phone systems at all of our bus stops.
Add a retail center to a central location within RTP	Park Center Plaza is conveniently located along Highway 54 near Davis Drive in RTP. It is a strip center that was renovated in the summer of 2008 and the developer is currently looking for tenants (coffee shops and restaurants). Several banks and the Radisson (the only hotel located within RTP) are within walking distance.
Analyze demographics and geographic location of RTP employee residences when planning transit routes	Triangle Transit’s planning staff engages in demographic and residential location analysis when planning transit routes. In our experience, there are several other factors that affect the success of transit service, including walkability at the rider’s end of the trip. In the case of RTP, this amenity is almost completely lacking, affecting the projected success of transit routes in RTP.
Develop a comprehensive transit plan for the Triangle region	The Special Transit Advisory Commission (STAC) developed a set of recommendations in 2008 for the future of transit in the Triangle Region. These recommendations were submitted to the two Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the region (Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro - DCHC MPO and Capital Area - CAMPO), which are currently developing their long range transportation plans. These plans will include a transit element.

III. Suggestions that Triangle Transit and/or SmartCommute@rtp will consider for implementation

- Promote transit use through local vendors
- Engage commercial interests in advertising
- Provide shuttles to all events held at RTP Headquarters
- Wireless internet service on all transit vehicles and at RTC
- Buddy system for first time transit users/Matching system for new transit riders (similar to carpool matching)
- RTP Carpool Day and other events as competitions among companies
- Carpool at lunch initiative – Don't Eat Alone
- Directions to RTP, RDU, and employer sites via transit – put this information on websites
- Blog for transit, rideshare, cycling
- Clarify rules of multi-use trail
- How-to/networking events specific to mode of transportation
- Publish How-To guides for each mode of transportation
- Step-by-step instructions as output from trip planner
- Better advertising for Share the Ride NC, GoTriangle and 485-RIDE
- Educate public on alternative transportation and improve image of transit through marketing
- Video testimonials of RTP commuters – peer to peer
- Market motivations for transit use: environment, time, well-being
- Tie Park infrastructure into regional trail system
- Bike safety courses
- Segregation of bike and ped uses on RTP multi-use trail
- Bicycle route planner
- Work with DOT for improved bicycle lanes in RTP
- Driver education/signage for bicycle safety and awareness
- Carpool pre-registration for safety purposes
- Bicycle racks/lockers at bus stops
- Better lighting at bus stops
- New developments built in transit-friendly manner
- Comprehensive transit plan for RTP
- Broaden planning for RTP to surrounding areas

IV. Suggestions to share with outside parties for consideration

RTP Companies

- Subsidized transit passes
- Preferred parking for carpoolers
- Support for teleconferencing and telecommuting
- Recognition for alternative commuters
- Incentives for all alternative commutes (not just bus/vanpool)
- On-site showers
- Improve food quality at cafeterias
- Release address data to transportation planners for better planning
- Employer-provided shared vehicles for daytime use and Emergency Ride Home
- Employer-funded amenities to make bus stops more comfortable
- Multiple access points for each business to improve traffic flow and routing for transit
- More advertisement for Triangle Transit and SmartCommute@rtp services within RTP Companies
- Directions to RTP, RDU, and employer sites via transit – put this information on websites

NCDOT

- Safe bike routes beyond Park boundaries into RTP
- Comprehensive bicycle/pedestrian facilities in Park (public and private Rights-Of-Way)
- Bicycle lanes in Park
- Separate facilities for bicycles, bridge over I-40
- Pavement markings to indicate shared space for autos and bikes
- Fix intersections so they are safer for pedestrians, bicycles, and autos
- HOV lanes on area highways
- Crosswalks with pedestrian signals at intersections in RTP

Municipalities

- Neighborhood circulators to pick up/drop off people at park-and-ride locations

V. Suggestions that are not feasible at this time (with responses)

Suggestion	Triangle Transit/SmartCommute@rtp Response
Consider different vehicle types for shuttles	Triangle Transit recently invested in smaller vehicles for shuttle service due to lower number of passengers using these services. However, two of our shuttle routes (46 and 47) are served using the same vehicles as Route 201 (North Raleigh), which uses a larger capacity bus.
Increase fare in exchange for more frequent service	Fares collected on Triangle Transit routes cover a fraction of our operating costs, so fares would have to be raised several-fold to pay for improvements in bus frequency using fares alone.
Use a percentage of bus pass sales to fund a service facility (e.g. medical) in RTP	As with fares, bus pass sales cover only a fraction of our operating costs. Diverting a portion of these sales would create a deficit in our operating revenue; moreover, it would take an inordinate amount of time to accrue the funding needed to build any type of service facility.
Commuter rail access and coordination with shuttles	Triangle Transit supports the implementation of a rail system in the region. This will require a significant new funding source and several years to build. Thus, this solution is not feasible in the short-term (next 2-3 years), which is the time horizon of the RTP Workshop project.
Expand hours of service later into night	In our experience, service provided beyond traditional commuting hours has been very lightly used, and thus extremely expensive in terms of operating cost per passenger. We provide a basic level of regional service after our peak service ends, and will continue to monitor this service to determine if adjustments or additional service are warranted. For patrons who have to work unscheduled overtime, we offer the Emergency Ride Home program (for more information, please visit: http://www.gotriangle.org/ERH/index.html). Although it is not feasible for Triangle Transit alone to implement this suggestion at this time, the item was added to the list of suggestions for the DCRP workshop to consider.
Demand-response service during weekday mid-day	Triangle Transit provided demand-response service in RTP during the midday period on weekdays prior to July 2007. This service was eliminated due to very low use; we reallocated the resources to a new service (midday Route 303 between Cary and Raleigh), which has seen greater use than mid-day RTP service. Although it is not feasible for Triangle Transit alone to implement this suggestion at this time, the item was added to the list of suggestions for the DCRP workshop to consider.
Increase frequency of service	Triangle Transit does not have the resources to provide wholesale improvements in bus frequency. We have been able to implement increased frequency on specific routes in the past based on demand and within the constraints of budgeted resources.
Use external advertising on transit vehicles for additional revenue	The Triangle Transit Board of Trustees has considered the use of exterior advertising on transit vehicles, but has decided not to use this option in the near term.
Pedi-cab service	The high speeds of vehicles on roadways around RTP create an unsafe environment for pedi-cabs, which are wider and travel at slower speeds than single-rider bicycles.

V. Suggestions that are not feasible at this time (with responses), cont.

Suggestion	Triangle Transit/SmartCommute@rtp Response
Employers charge for parking/ parking cash out	Most employers in RTP are located on large campuses with ample parking for employees and for this reason, it is not likely that RTP employers will start charging for parking. Some employers do provide preferred parking for carpools and hybrid vehicles. However, this item was added to the list of suggestions for the DCRP workshop to consider.
Change land use and zoning in RTP to allow for more dense development	The Research Triangle Foundation's work plan for the upcoming year calls for RTF staff and a committee from the Owners and Tenants Association to review the existing covenants and zoning to see what changes are appropriate. However, the current economic situation will probably affect the ability to see the effect of changes for several years. Market forces and ownership patterns also influence development in RTP. For example, current zoning allows buildings to be up to 140 feet high in Durham County and there is no height limit in Wake County. However, currently the tallest building in RTP is only 6 stories (approximately 72 feet). It should also be noted that RTP does not exist in isolation. What happens in the area around and adjacent to RTP is as important as what happens in RTP. In the approximately 4 mile area around RTP, over 30,000 dwelling units exist or have been approved for development. There is also substantial additional office, retail and industrial space which has been approved. Again, from what the Foundation is hearing from developers, the implementation of the approved projects may be delayed because of the economy.
Locate bus stops closer to businesses	With traditional fixed-route bus service, routes would become prohibitively long (both distance and time) if they were to serve each business off of the main roads. This type of service is more feasible with employer-specific shuttles, which is one of the options we will study further.
Retail center near new transit center	The likely location for a future permanent bus transit center (and rail station) is proximate to retail/commercial services.
Multiple access points for each business to improve traffic flow and routing for transit	The ability to provide multiple access points is dependent on the size of the property, the frontage on public roads and often the need to separate truck traffic from employee and visitor traffic. Vehicular access points onto public roads are controlled by the N.C. Department of Transportation. Current NCDOT standards require that driveways be a minimum of 1200 feet apart. NCDOT is trying to balance the need for access to property with the need to keep traffic flowing well on the roads that serve the businesses in RTP.
Joint ticket office for all transit agencies (including Greyhound, Amtrak, and local bus agencies)	Regional bus passes, valid on all of the local and regional transit services in the area (not Greyhound or Amtrak) are sold at Durham Station, Moore Square (CAT terminal) and Triangle Transit's Regional Transit Center (RTC). With the exception of Triangle Transit's RTC, these locations are permanent. Also, Durham Station (scheduled to open in March 2009) is across the street from the Durham Amtrak and Greyhound stations. While a joint ticket sales location could become more important should a regional rail system be constructed, at this time there does not appear to be enough demand for a joint ticket office offering tickets for all existing transit in the region.

Appendix – Workshop on Alternative Transportation in RTP: Background Information

Transit Service in RTP

Triangle Transit began directly operating regional bus transit service in 1993, with service connecting Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill to each other and to employment destinations in The Research Triangle Park. Prior to the relocation of Triangle Transit's Regional Transit Center in December 2008, Triangle Transit provided access to its system of regional bus services (which now includes service to Apex, Cary, Garner, and Wake Forest) to a large number of employers within the Park through a combination of fixed-route and "by-request" shuttle services. Even with front-door service to many employment sites, the RTP shuttle routes were among the lowest performing routes in Triangle Transit's system.

The Regional Transit Center's Impact on RTP Shuttles

With the service changes related to the relocation of Triangle Transit's Regional Transit Center in December 2008 from RTP (Park Dr at NC-54, RTP) to the Imperial Center (Emperor Blvd at Slater Rd, Durham), the number of RTP employers served by Triangle Transit shuttles decreased, meaning fewer RTP employees have direct access to regional bus routes departing from the Regional Transit Center.

Challenges and Opportunities for Transit in RTP

The large concentration of employment in RTP makes it an important travel (and therefore, transit) destination in our region. However, the nature of land use within the Park makes it a challenge to provide consistent, reliable, and cost-efficient transit service to a majority of RTP employees. To address these competing issues, Triangle Transit included in its Short-Range Transit Plan (adopted July 2008) a project to evaluate RTP shuttle service and identify demonstration projects aimed at improving regional access to transit for employees in the Park. The Workshop on Alternative Transportation in RTP is the first step in this process.

Goal of the Workshop on Alternative Transportation in RTP

Our goal is to come away from the workshop with a list of innovative ideas for ways to improve transit access to Park employers. This workshop is **NOT** about how to alter existing shuttle routes. The workshop **IS** about discussing your **NEW** ideas for how we (Triangle Transit, the Research Triangle Foundation/SmartCommute@rtp, and RTP Employers and Employees) can make it easier and more convenient for employees to get to their jobs in the Park by means other than driving alone.

What will we do with the Workshop results?

Triangle Transit has engaged faculty and students at the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to evaluate the ideas that come out of the Workshop, as well as other approaches to providing transit access to other office/research parks across the country, and provide recommendations for pilot projects to test during the next fiscal year (July 2009-June 2010). Triangle Transit and any partners involved in implementing the pilot projects will evaluate them for effectiveness and make plans to permanently implement successful projects.