**Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS)**

**LYNX Red Line/North Corridor Public Involvement Plan**

Fall 2017

**BACKGROUND**

In fall 2017, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) was directed by it’s governing body (the Metropolitan Transit Commission) to take a fresh look at the long-range transit plan for Charlotte’s North Corridor.

The primary purpose of the study was to provide the necessary land use and transportation technical analysis, including stakeholder and public outreach, to support the selection by the MTC of new Locally Preferred Alternatives (LPA) for North Corridor/LYNX Red Line.

This directive presented many challenges to the project staff given the contentious history of transit planning within this very corridor. The LYNX Red Line commuter rail was adopted and planned for this corridor over a decade ago, but has never been implemented as a result of unsuccessful negotiations with Norfolk Southern Railroad.

**GOALS**

1. Introduce the study to the public and gain understanding of citizen’s transit values in North and West corridors as well as Uptown (Phase 1 of public outreach)
2. Communicate proposed concepts to citizens based on transit values (Phase 2 of public outreach)
3. Present alignment recommendations to citizens and stakeholders (Phase 3 of public outreach)
4. Provide an analysis of public outreach to support new Locally Preferred Alternatives for North, West and Uptown corridors
5. Communicate final LPA to stakeholders and citizens

**TARGET AUDIENCES**

* Residents of the greater Charlotte region within designated study area:
  + The North Corridor including 26 miles from Uptown Charlotte to the Town of Mooresville in Iredell County and is generally 3 to 5 miles wide. Approximately the first 9 miles of the corridor are within the City of Charlotte followed by 5.5 miles within the town Huntersville, 3 miles within the Town of Cornelius, 1.5 miles within the Town of Davidson, and 5 miles within the Town of Mooresville.
  + Uptown Charlotte is the City of Charlotte’s central business district and is bounded by

I-77 interstate to the northwest and I-277 to the North, East, and South. It covers an approximate area of 2 square miles.

* CATS riders on bus and rail routes along the alignment
* Charlotte and surrounding government employees
* Stakeholders:
  + Major land/ business owners throughout the alignment
    - Schools
    - Libraries
    - Corporate Centers
    - Shopping Malls
    - Recreational Centers
    - Religious Centers
    - Organized neighborhood groups
  + Community-based organizations
  + Business organizations: (Chambers, Uptown and Towns Development corps., Hospitality associations, etc.)
  + Local governments
* Elected Officials from municipal organizations in study area:
  + Town of Huntersville,
  + Town of Cornelius,
  + Town of Davidson
  + Town of Mooresville
  + City of Charlotte
  + Counties of Mecklenburg, Iredell and Gaston
* Media

**STRATEGY**

CATS will implement a three phase public involvement program that will reach residents, businesses, civic organizations and community organizations throughout the North and Uptown corridors. Major outreach is designed to collect public comment and translate that feedback into notable recommendations for the project.

**TACTICS**

**Goal 1: Introduce the study to the public & gain understanding of citizen’s transit values in North corridor**

* Inform governing groups about study
  + MTC – Metropolitan Transit Commission
  + CRTPO – Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization
  + Charlotte City Council
  + Town of Huntersville
  + Town of Cornelius
  + Town of Davidson
  + Town of Mooresville
  + Iredell County
  + Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners
  + Gaston County
* Inform stakeholders about the study
* Inform current advisory committees about project
  + CTAG: Citizens Transit Advisory Group
  + TSAC: Transit Services Advisory Committee
* Develop LYNX System Update Study page on ridetransit.org
* Develop fact sheet that clearly and concisely presents information about corridor and the study
* Inform the public and media
  + Distribute Press Release
  + Send Rider’s Alert
  + City account post to Nextdoor
  + CATS Social Media
* Build relationship with corridor specific media (other than represented on CATS media list):
  + The Herald Weekly
  + Mooresville Tribune
  + Cornelius Today
  + Lake Norman Citizen
* Hold approximately 10 public meetings throughout corridor to gather feedback during first phase of outreach

**Goal 2: Communicate proposed concepts to citizens based on transit values (Phase 2 of public outreach)**

* Hold 2nd set of public meetings throughout corridor to present concepts
* Update stakeholders and governing groups on concepts

**Goal 3: Present alignment recommendations to citizens and stakeholders (Phase 3 of public outreach)**

* Update stakeholders and governing groups on concepts
* Engage media in public outreach process
  + Host a round table to answer questions media may have about the study
  + Invite specific media outlets to attend meetings and interview Project Manager
  + Provide graphics, talking points, fact sheets and alignment recommendations
    - Include information on how public can provide feedback to information they receive from media

**Goal 4: Provide an analysis of public outreach to support new Locally Preferred Alternatives for North corridor**

* Compile an analysis document of stakeholder and public outreach to support the new LPA
* Track public involvement trends including social media interactions, public meeting attendance, and special events
* Record and analyze public comments acquired throughout the study

**Goal 5: Communicate final LPA to stakeholders and community members**

* Share final recommended LPAs on ridetransit.org and on CATS social media
* Work with local media to communicate CATS system recommendations to their audiences
* Inform governing and stakeholder groups about service recommendation
  + MTC – Metropolitan Transit Commission
  + CRTPO – Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization
  + Charlotte City Council
  + Town of Huntersville
  + Town of Cornelius
  + Town of Davidson
  + Town of Mooresville
  + Iredell County
  + Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners
  + Gaston County
* Inform current advisory committees about service recommendation
  + CTAG: Citizens Transit Advisory Group
  + TSAC: Transit Services Advisory Committee

**MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS**

* **Ridetransit.org** 
  + The LYNX System Update Study will be the project landing page with consistent branding and themes of other CATS projects (i.e. Blue Line Extension, Silver Line, etc.). The web page will contain a project description, links to reports, media releases, presentations, public outreaching findings, graphics and handouts.
  + Create a banner ad on Charlotte Area Transit System homepage to easily navigate to LYNX System Update Study landing page
* **Online Survey** 
  + Citizen and business surveys to capture opinions about the project through each phase.
  + Surveys at public meetings
* **Earned Media** 
  + Press releases & media pitches
  + Regional media List
  + Corridor specific media list
  + Industry publications and online bloggers
  + Radio (i.e. Charlotte Talks)
* **Community Networks**
  + Build database of email addresses of citizens (via NotifyMe) and businesses along alignment
  + Utilize rider alerts on CATS buses and rail serving the alignment
  + Nextdoor
  + Partner with corridorcommunities to connect through newsletters, websites, social media & other citizen communication venues
  + Industry specific social media
* **Social Media Outlets**
  + CATS Facebook and Twitter
  + Encourage towns in Study Scope to share information on town social media outlets
  + Reddit
* **Paid Media**
  + Digital ads
    - Facebook
    - Twitter
    - Charlotte Observer
    - North corridor periodicals
  + Pandora radio (by zip code)
  + Hulu video streaming (by zip code)
  + YouTube (by zip code)
  + Radio (WFAE)
* **Other**
  + Work with CATS pass sales outlets to share information about the study

**MEASUREMENTS**

1. Public meeting attendance
2. Citizen/Business database: This will be created, populated and updated throughout the process.
3. Online survey responses
4. Web page and advertisement reach and click-throughs
5. Social Media Engagement Analytics (reach and click throughs, etc.)
6. Stakeholder meetings and feedback