

High speed rail is important for planning for the Triangle's growth

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Wake's population is growing by 100 people per day and is projected to double to 1.2 million by 2030. Raleigh and Cary are among the top ten fastest growing cities in the U.S. We need to plan well for our continuing population growth, in ways that will ensure the best possible quality of life for all of us for decades to come. We will need infrastructure that supports our growth in an environmentally and economically sustainable way. High speed rail is one of those transportation choices the Triangle needs to help meet our growing transportation needs.

Mass transit is simply a must for a large metropolitan region. While high speed rail is used differently than the local regional transit system being planned (that will include expanded bus service, light and commuter rail), we will also need high speed rail to help us move our growing influx of people more efficiently.

High speed rail is also a good choice to help protect our air quality; it reduces the number of cars on the road lessening public health concerns and impacts on climate change. It's good for the economy and quality of life as it will enhance cost efficient transportation choices for business and individuals. We are a community on the move, with young people, aging baby boomers, professionals, commuters, people with disabilities and more asking for more transportation options beyond the automobile.

Bringing high speed rail to Raleigh and the Triangle will connect us better to the entire East Coast. Most of the industrialized world has long embraced high speed rail, and it is no surprise that expanding high speed rail nationwide was a priority in the federal stimulus package. North Carolina and Virginia have worked on developing a Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor for years, and we are fortunate to have won federal funding for this project. What's more, the future local regional transit system will benefit from needed upgrades and rail crossing improvements that will be funded with the high speed rail funds. The high speed rail project will help us get a local transit system in place sooner.

As we expand our transportation services, safety and reducing environmental impacts must be of utmost importance. Fortunately, rail technology has improved vastly, and we expect that best practices and design excellence will be used to promote safety and to reduce noise and minimize other environmental effects. High speed rail is different than tradition diesel rail, which means a quieter, smoother and cleaner transportation system.

WakeUP Wake County strongly believes in the public process. Rail can only be successfully implemented if public views are heard and taken into account in the critical process of selecting the best routes for the rail line. We are pleased that the public can comment through September 10 on the environmental impacts of different proposed routes. NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) should keep the doors open with local neighborhoods. Impact on

any neighborhood is truly unfortunate, and NCDOT should choose the route that will have the least negative affects on the most people. Also vital is that homeowners and businesses are fairly and promptly reimbursed for rail routes affecting their property. Mitigations are needed, for whatever route is chosen. We call upon NCDOT to explain their proposed mitigations in addition to listening and taking into consideration the concerns of local citizens.

While change can be hard, adding a modern high speed rail system to our transit options is essential to meeting the needs of a major metropolitan area like the Triangle and our 1.3 million citizens. Mass transit is used by all major metropolitan areas of the nation and world, and we are fortunate we can plan now to be a part of this for years to come.

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WakeUP Wake County is the citizens' voice for good growth in Wake and the Triangle. For more information about growth, transportation and land use, please visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.wakeupwakecounty.org"](http://www.wakeupwakecounty.org)