



Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization – *Getting There 2045*

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

As part of the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization's (BGMPO) 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (*Getting There 2045*), interviews were conducted with eight stakeholder groups in May and June of 2019. These groups were selected with the guidance of the BGMPO and represent the diverse educational, health, economic development, and transportation interests and needs of the planning area. Interviews were conducted in-person at Impact Alamance and over the phone. The summary of the comments is included below and grouped by major theme. While all stakeholders were asked a similar set of questions, some questions were tailored to capture the specific needs of certain populations (i.e. students, senior, low-income householders, prospective businesses, etc.).

Key Themes

The following are themes that were repeated over the course of the interviews. Refer to the sections below for more information on specific recommendations.

- **Unfamiliarity among the stakeholders with the BGMPO**, its functions, and the MTP process, however there was consistent interest in participating in the transportation planning process.
- Interviewees stressed the **existing deficiencies of the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks** for access to social services, recreation, employment, and supporting a high quality of life.
- There was **strong support for coordinating future multimodal transportation** investments with the region's growth.
- The BGMPO transportation area was reported as **lacking North-South connections** to the interstate system and that gap was affecting mobility and economic development.
- There were key roadways near the interstates and large institutions where congestion during peak hours and events presents mobility and safety issues with **recommendations for widenings, intersection improvements, and additional roadways**.
- Request for inclusion of other **considerations such as health, mobility impaired, income, vehicle access** in transportation investment decisions.

Familiarity with the BGMPO

The interview subjects were asked about their knowledge of the BGMPO and its purpose and duties.

- Few of the interview participants were familiar with the work or mission of the BGMPO. For many, the interview request was their first direct participation with the organizations. Others responded that they had heard of the BGMPO through service on the area's various advisory boards.
- Participants from parks, recreation, and economic development groups were familiar with the BGMPO's purpose and responsibility in prioritizing transportation investments.

Greatest Concerns about Area's Transportation System and its Impact on Respective Organization's Mission

Interviews were asked what concerned them the most about the BGMPO's existing transportation system and its impact on their organization's ability to fulfill its mission.

- Some interviewees noted that maintaining the existing vehicle connections to facilities is important, but access to facilities should be improved for walking and biking.
- Several respondents indicated support for expanding LINK and ACTA transit service to meet the needs of seniors, students, employers, employees, and residents with low incomes or no vehicle. This expansion included frequency of service, stops, and stops with amenities like shelters and sidewalk connections.
- Two interviewees stated that multimodal investments are essential to the growth and competitiveness of the region, and this included roadway, rail (freight and transit), and airport investments.
- Several interviews stressed the importance of maintaining and improving the region's quality of life, and this included improving connectivity to resources like schools, parks, and social services.
- Improving safety for pedestrians was noted, especially those dependent on walking, transit, and those attending area schools.
- Roadway infrastructure deficits were noted as challenges to meeting anticipated demand for school and business expansion.

Public Private Partnerships

Select interviewees were asked about their perspective on the role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in supporting transportation improvements.

- One perspective noted that—generally--PPPs would accelerate the schedule of project delivery and be a more sustainable way for long term operations.
- Another interview responded that PPPs could work with the private railroads to expand to a second set of rail lines, additional hangars at the airport, and drone delivery. However, demand for PPPs in the BGMPO was not anticipated.

Adequacy of the BGMPO Transportation System

Interviewees were asked if the MPO's transportation system adequately supported their respective organization's needs, such as access to parks or healthy foods or employers. Specific critical issues were noted.

- Two respondents noted the lack of universal access to parks and recreational facilities by transit, walking, and biking.
- Some interviews noted that residents have to walk on roads to access social services and grocery stores, and there are key gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network. Locations with critical issues or challenges include:
 - Gap in the Shared Use Path near Elon south to the Alamance Crossings center

- Vaugh Road
- Sidewalk access in many locations in northern and eastern Burlington.
- Schools with no crosswalks to sidewalks
- Church St - general lack of sidewalks
- Respondents from the Community College reported that the existing transportation system could be improved to support expansion of the college. This included sidewalks on Jimmie Kerr Road, expanded LINK transit service, reducing operating speeds on Jimmie Kerr Road, and improved signal operations from Jimmie Kerr Road into the campus.
- One interviewee stated that seniors reported having difficulty navigating Alamance Crossings due to the complexity of traffic patterns. Otherwise, most seniors reported driving and are used to the area's transportation changes.

Specific Safety and Mobility Concerns

Interviewees were asked if they were aware of specific existing safety or mobility concerns relative to the communities whom they served.

- Parks and recreational facilities were noted as accessible primarily by vehicle, but existing pedestrian facilities across bridges and bicycle access overall would need to be addressed. For local parks, sidewalks discontinuities are present, as is a lack of transit access.
- Interviewees from the educational and institutional sectors shared that special events and morning and evening pick-up and drop-off times present congestion and safety issues.
- Several respondents shared the area's transportation infrastructure overall was oriented towards vehicles and that there are not enough pedestrian facilities.
- Access and speed management were mentioned several times as global safety concerns.
- One interviewee noted that the closure of Haggard Avenue through Elon University would support pedestrian safety.
- One interviewee shared that a "Health in All Policies" policy should be pursued for new developments to encourage pedestrian access and safety improvements.

Attracting Increased Economic Development

Select interviewees were asked about their perspective on deficiencies within the BGMPO that make it difficult to do conduct business presently and in the future.

- Interviewees noted that the existing transportation network is perceived as accessible for businesses, though there are accessibility challenges. For example, the following improvements were noted: connectivity for communities on the northside of US-70, additional options to University Dr, and improvements to the interchange of NC-119 and I-85.
- Investments in multimodal projects were noted as strategies to support increased quality of life and help attract employers and employees.
- Main commercial thoroughfares such as Webb Ave and Maple Avenue need improvements to attract businesses and residents to underinvested areas.

Initiatives to Improve Transportation Systems

Interviewees were asked about plans to improve transit use, decrease congestion, and improve access to their sites (if applicable).

- One educational partner reported that its transit service is attempting to sync with LINK transit to support trips, and route expansion has been considered.
- Another educational interviewee shared that it is difficult to reduce vehicle congestion when public transportation routes and stops are limited. Potential expansion of an educational campus is being explored with development of additional transit service. Additional parking spaces were also being explored.
- Long-range improvements in pedestrian and bicycle connections to parks and recreational facilities were reported as dependent on roadway improvements.

Significant Projects and Challenges within 25 Years

Interviewees were asked about the transportation-related issues in the BGMPO that would most significantly affect their organization over the next 25 years.

- Several interviewees responded that coordinated planning between development and multimodal transportation systems was important. One respondent identified the need to coordinate transportation improvements with new development along University Drive (NC-100).
- Several interviewees noted that emphasis should be placed on health outcomes and infrastructure that meets the needs of all people to safely access services.
- Bicycle and pedestrian-friendly roads were repeated as future issues to address.
- One interviewee noted that it is difficult to guess the needs of seniors in the future, though the transportation system be easier to access with increasing demand, but it will be dependent on what transportation is prioritized for seniors.
- One interviewee stated that over next 25 years, the transportation system needs to focus on increasing capacity/throughput on Jimmy Kerr Road and I-85/I-40.

Getting There 2045 Goals

Interviewees were asked for their perspectives on one goal for the *Getting There 2045* plan. These goals included:

- Try to provide an easy and accessible and affordable option for seniors to access recreation
- Provide health services/resources/programming at the hospital and other locations throughout the network that are accessible for everyone in Alamance County through all modes of transportation (especially transit)
- Provide connections for students to downtown Burlington and develop a comprehensive bus network that would be convenient with connections across town
- Enhance I-85/I-40 to make it NC's "Main St"; put the attention on the "Main St" of North Carolina, the heartbeat of Alamance County.
- Focus on commuter rail and developing TOD at the downtown station as a community and economic development strategy.

- Increase accessibility and connectivity through investing in sidewalks and other active transportation venues and infrastructure.
- Use the community health assessment as the foundation for the plan to prioritize the projects, focus on those who are most dependent on the improvements.
- Being able to walk from Mebane to Gibsonville without being scared.
- Have a comprehensive system of connectivity to provide access to parks and the community without having to drive

Staying Connected to the BGMPO and Planning Process

Interviewees were asked how they would like to be further engaged in the MPO's transportation planning process.

- Most interviewees responded positively that they wanted to be kept in communication with the BGMPO during this and future planning processes. Several offered their assistance in bridging the BGMPO and issues like health, senior citizens, and economic development. There was also interest in learning more on the BGMPO's processes, procedures, and functions.

Stakeholder Interview Participants

- Burlington Recreation and Parks - Lisa Wolff
- Alamance County Recreation and Parks Department - Brian Baker
- Wellness Collaborative - Marcy Green & Ann Meletzke
- Burlington Chamber of Commerce - Peter Bishop
- Alamance County Chamber of Commerce - Mac Williams
- Elon University - Tom Flood & Raymond Fletcher
- Alamance Community College - Tom Hartman, Scott Queen, David Prevatte
- Alamance Network for Inclusive Health Care - Kelsey Warren
- Kernodle Senior Center - Jane Smith