

WAKE BUS PLAN: ADA FUNDING POLICY

WAKE BUS PLAN: ADA FUNDING POLICY draft was recommended by the TPAC Program Development Subcommittee on October 24, 2023. Public engagement period conducted from November 6-20, 2023. TPAC consideration is scheduled on December 13, 2023, with Wake Transit governing board consideration anticipated to occur in January 2024.

Once adopted, this policy will take effect in the next full quarter of Wake Transit Operations. If adopted on the schedule noted above, it will become applicable for the reimbursement of ADA paratransit expenditures accrued within the 3rd quarter of FY2024 (January 1-March 31, 2024).

GO FORWARD
A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN TRANSIT

2 Existing Conditions: ADA Budgets and Reimbursements

OVERVIEW

The first step in developing a policy for future processes was to consider how the budgeting and reimbursements work today. The Wake Bus Plan team examined existing conditions by reviewing the 2018 Wake Bus Plan and Annual Work Plans. The team also interviewed representatives of each of the three transit providers to understand how they budget ADA costs, estimated costs, and requested reimbursements. The team asked agency staff for their perspectives on how well the existing methods work and used the meetings to request available data specific to ADA budgeting and reimbursements.

Key findings from the data and conversations included:

- Transit providers spend a considerable portion of their operating budgets providing ADA paratransit services. ADA paratransit costs have been increasing year on year for the past several years (see Figure 1)².
- ADA costs are increasing, due in part to inflation, escalation in driver pay, and regional population growth.
- ADA ridership is in flux. After year-on-year increases between FY16 and FY19, ridership softened, as the impact of COVID-19 was felt across all services. ADA ridership, like all transit ridership, started to recover in 2021 and 2022. ADA riders are returning to the system in part because of the suspension of fares means ADA services are also free.

GoRaleigh and GoTriangle are spending an increasing portion of their systemwide costs on ADA services. Depending on the agency, ADA paratransit costs represent between 15% and 25% of overall operating costs (see Source: National Transit Database (adapted by Nelson\Nygaard)

- Figure 2).

² GoCary is not included because analysis is based on NTD. GoCary's ADA costs are combined with other demand response service operated by the agency.

Engagement Summary Report Section for ADA Funding Policy Public Review Draft

Appendix A: Engagement Summary Report

As part of the FY2025-2030 Wake Bus Plan development process, community stakeholders, a core technical team and program staff reviewed the previously adopted ADA Funding Policy, which

1. Establishes a process for budgeting ADA related expenses in the Wake Transit financial model, and
2. Establishes a process for reimbursing ADA expenses associated with Wake Transit implementation.

Complimentary ADA/Paratransit services are federally required to ensure that individuals who are unable to ride on or get to and from general transit stops and stations, will still have access to transportation services. There are many guidelines that transit operators follow to meet the federal standards for these services. It was noted that ADA service costs are variable.

ADA costs will adjust based on fixed route service. **As routes expand or operate longer hours, or more days, there may be more demand for ADA service.** Other factors that influence ADA demand include overall population, poverty rates and the strength of the overall network.

After evaluating several possible options to budget and reimburse future ADA expenditures, the recommended path forward is to set aside an amount equal to 15% of Wake Transit's annual fixed route budget for each provider, to be used for ADA reimbursement. It was also determined that projects funded as part of the Community Funding Area Program would not fall under these policy guidelines and instead will remain reimbursed through their CFAP budget allocations.

The draft Wake Bus Plan: ADA Funding Policy, incorporating those recommended policy changes, was recommended by the TPAC's Program Development Subcommittee on October 24, 2023. It is being released, along with an update to the Wake Bus Plan: Service Standards and Performance Guidelines, for a 14-day public review and comment period from November 6th-November 20th, 2023. This engagement effort is being conducted in accordance with the Wake Transit Community Engagement Policy.

Members of the community can visit <https://www.goforwardnc.org/wake-county/get-involved/> to view documents available for public review and other Wake Transit-related outreach and communications activities. On that page, you can submit questions and comments to the planning team as well as sign up to receive emails for future Wake Transit program updates and activities.

This section, Engagement Summary Report, will be updated with information and comments collected during the public review period to be provided to the CAMPO and GoTriangle governing boards prior to their consideration for adoption.