Charlotte’s Transit Sales Tax

Presented by
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New Partners for Smart Growth
10th Annual Conference
February 4, 2011
Committee of 100 (1994)

Composition
• 100+ members from Mecklenburg County and 5 adjacent counties
• Included elected officials and business community reps

Charge
• Develop Community Consensus on Vision for Land Use and Transportation
• Define Major Revenue Sources
• Determine Organizations Structure
• Long-term growth management strategies for Charlotte-Mecklenburg

• Five primary transportation and development corridors

• Transform unfocused development patterns in corridors and wedges to compact mixed-use development along corridors and in station areas
Committee of 100
Transit Alternatives

• Improve Express, Local and Regional Bus Service over next 3-5 years

• Improve and Expand Bus Service as Primary Short-Range and Long-Range Solutions

• Plan and Execute High Capacity Transit to Meet Long-Range Needs
Sales Tax Advantages

Least Objectionable form of Tax/Fee

• Ease of Collection
• Generates Significant Amount of Revenue
• Applies to All
• Generates Revenue from adjacent Counties
• Grows with inflation
Committee of 100 Final Report

- Adopted by all Ring Cities
- Sales Tax implemented by South Carolina
- York County funding Highway Projects and Transit Studies with new Tax
- So What Happened on the North Carolina Side?
GOOD LUCK!

KEVIN SIES

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Committee of 10 (1996/1997)

Composition
• Chair of Committee of 100
• 2 Charlotte City Council members
• Area representatives on NCBOT
• Several key business leaders

Charge
• Review and Reaffirm/Revise Recommendations of “Committee of 100”
• Determine Which Recommendations are Most Feasible and Develop Strategy for Implementation
• Collaborate with State’s Transit 2001 Commission to Address Charlotte’s Needs Through Their Proposals
Committee of 10 Results

- 5 Year Transportation Plan
- Support for “Local Option” Revenue Sources for Transit Improvements
- Led to Enabling Legislation for ½ Cent Local Option Sales Tax
Determining the Needs

- Intensive 7-month public process (January – July 1998)
- Hired a Land Use/Transit Consultant team
- 3 Community-wide meetings to get feedback on the County’s transit needs
- 15 Corridor meetings to get input on technologies, alignments, and land use
- July presentation to elected officials
- August County Commission decision to put sales tax on ballot
Goals

• Support Centers and Corridors Land Use Vision
• Provide Choices in Mode of Travel
• Develop a Regional Transit System
• Support Economic Growth and Sustainable Development
Success in 1998!

- Voter referendum on ½ percent sales use tax for public transportation on November 1998 ballot
- Promoted by Charlotte Chamber and paired with $100 million Road Bond
- Sales tax approved 58% to 42%
## Decade of Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2025 Integrated Transit/Land Use Plan developed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on Centers and Corridors Vision</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lead to Transit Sales Tax passage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(58% approved)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>MTC established</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>CATS created</td>
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<td>Light rail LPA for South Corridor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Major Investment Studies initiated in other corridors</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2025 Corridor System Plan adopted</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-2006</td>
<td>Transit service expanded and improved</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2030 Corridor System Plan Update adopted</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>LYNX Blue Line opened late November</td>
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• One citizen funds local petition for the repeal
  – Signatures obtained at CATS’ main transportation center
  – Petition misrepresented as a means to reduce Charlotte property taxes

• Elected officials and community leaders support transit and NC’s first light rail line

• NC law prohibits public agencies from advocacy
Charlotte Chamber Leads The World Series of Campaigns

Maybe voting for that transit tax repeal was a bad idea.

Aging requires choice of transportation to maintain independence. Don’t take it away.

Vote AGAINST Transit Tax Repeal!

City of Charlotte
Consequences of a Repeal

CATS’ Services with Sales Tax

CATS’ Services without Sales Tax

City of Charlotte
• Unprecedented 70% vote against repeal
• LYNX Blue Line Grand Opening
  – Over 100,000 riders join the celebration
• Transit Ambassadors help patrons navigate the system
• Ridership
  – Starts strong and stays strong
  – Opposition melts away
• Over two million riders in first six months of service
Oct., 2007:

Light rail's a boondoggle! A waste of taxpayers' money! No one will ride it! Their budget's obscene! They want to spend how much on parking lots? Ridiculous! CATS can't do anything right!

JUNE, 2008:

Light rail's a disaster! The trains are too crowded! The rail line doesn't go far enough! There's nowhere to park! CATS can't do anything right!

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