

## CHAPTER V-B TRANSPORTATION

Concord is well served by an extensive roadway network, both within the region and beyond. Access is provided through nearby Interstate 85 (one of the busiest interstates in the southeast), I-485 Outerbelt (providing access throughout the Charlotte region), state and federal highways, Concord Regional Airport, Charlotte/Douglas International Airport, and rail . Completion of the I-485 Outerbelt in 2010 will further improve accessibility between Concord and the surrounding area via connections with US 29 (Concord Parkway), NC 49, and I-85. The Outerbelt will also improved accessibility to the amenities available in Concord, such as the Concord Mills retail center, and open up new economic market opportunities for the City.

### 1. Commuting Patterns

Individual automobile ownership is important to Concord residents. In 2000, more than 83% of the Concord workforce commutes in his or her own car, while only 12.5% carpool. Less than 1% of area workers take public transportation to work. Another 1% of workers walk to work and 2% telecommute or work at home. Concord commuters average 26 minutes of commuting time. Table V-B-1 provides commuting data for Cabarrus, County and Concord.

**Table V-B-1  
Methods of Commuting, Concord and Cabarrus County  
2000**

	Cabarrus County		Concord	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Workers 16 Yrs. and Over</b>	<b>65,982</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>27,895</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Car, Truck or Van – Drove Alone	54,965	83.3%	23,228	83.3%
Car, Truck or Van – Carpooled	8,085	12.3%	3,475	12.5%
Public Transportation (including taxi)	237	0.4%	84	0.3%
Walked	700	1.1%	304	1.1%
Other Means	490	0.7%	255	0.9%
Worked at Home	1,505	2.3%	549	2.0%
<b>Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes)</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>---</b>

(Source: US Census, 2000.)

More than 21,000 Concord residents travel outside of Cabarrus County to work. It is not surprising that the destination of more than 75% of those residents commuting to work outside of the County is Mecklenburg County and the Charlotte metro area. More than 12,000 persons commute into Concord to work. Of the outside residents coming to work in Cabarrus County, 66% are from neighboring Rowan County and 18% are from Mecklenburg County.

Concord residents can expect more transportation options in the future. Current transit plans aim to reduce the dependence on the automobile for travel to work and shopping by making transit readily available and attractive. At the same time, the influx of new business and industry into

Concord and the surrounding area will provide more local employment opportunities, which can keep more workers closer to home, lessen commute times and make alternative modes of travel more feasible. In addition, Concord Mills, and surrounding commercial development, offer retail and entertainment opportunities close to residents, reducing the need for personal trips to Charlotte.

## **2. Metropolitan Planning Organization**

The Cabarrus Rowan area was initially designated an “Urbanized Area” by the US Bureau of the Census in 1980. This designation enabled the formation of the *Cabarrus South Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization* (MPO) which changed its name to the *Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization*. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was jointly executed that same year between the Cities of Concord and Kannapolis; the Towns of China Grove, Landis, Mt. Pleasant, and Harrisburg; the County of Cabarrus, the southern portion of Rowan County; and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The memorandum delineated responsibilities in maintaining the continuing planning process and established a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) with the responsibility for general review, guidance, and coordination of the continuing planning process. A Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of representatives of the elected boards of each jurisdiction was also established to assure coordination between the several policy boards and the MPO operations. Since 1980, the Cabarrus Rowan MPO has served as the transportation planning authority for the member governments – providing long range planning and maintaining both the *Transportation Improvement Plan* and the *Long Range Transportation Plan* for the region (Figure V-B-1)

In addition, the Cabarrus Rowan MPO is a member of the Charlotte Regional Authority for Transportation (CRAFT). CRAFT was created by joint resolution and includes the three MPO’s of the Centralina planning region – 1) Cabarrus/Rowan; 2) Gaston/Mecklenburg/Union; and 3) the Rock Hill South Carolina urban area. CRAFT goals include exploring mobility options within the metro region and into neighboring South Carolina as well as the expansion of the existing Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS).

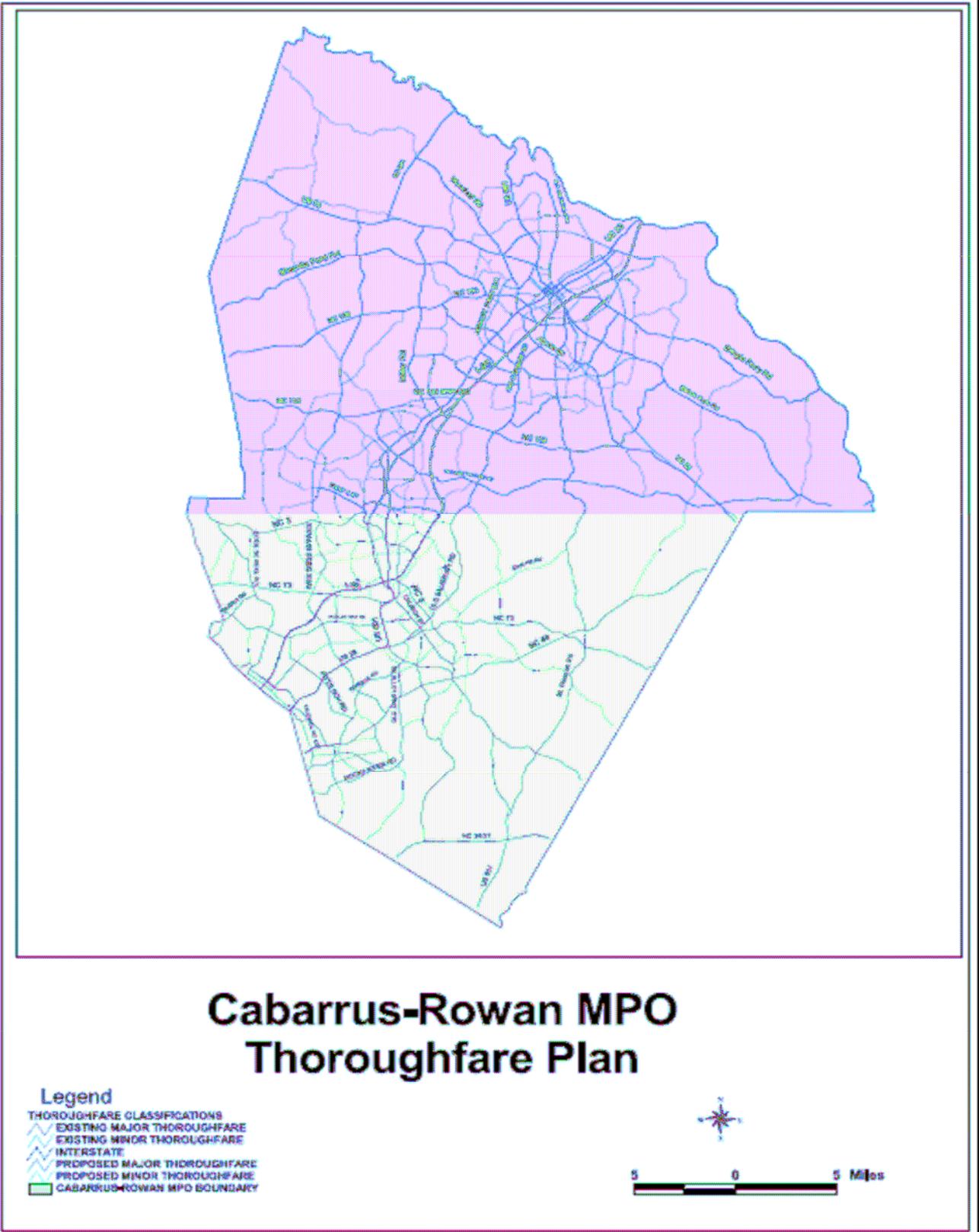
## **3. Major Roads**

The City of Concord is linked to the greater region by three major highways (US 29, US 601, and NC 49) and three interstate highways (I-85, I-77 and I-485). Figure V-B-2 depicts the existing and planned major roads within the City of Concord. Interstate 85 is the fastest growing corridor on the East Coast, stretching from Washington, DC to Atlanta, GA. Traffic counts for 2000 indicate that traffic volume on I-85 averages between 62,000 trips per day just south of Dale Earnhardt Boulevard, to 79,000 trips per day just north of Concord Mills Boulevard. I-85 and Davidson Highway (NC 73) connect with I-77, a major connector, approximately 15 miles south of Cabarrus County running from Cleveland, OH to Columbia, SC. Major developments including the Concord Mills Mall, the Concord Regional Airport, Northlite Shopping Center, Copperfield, the Carolina Mall, the NorthEast Medical Center and numerous other businesses and industries are located immediately off of I-85 in Concord.

The I-485 Outer Belt around Charlotte is approximately 60% complete. The portion between I-77 and I-85 was delayed due to funding issues and is not expected to be completed before 2010. Ground was first broken on this relatively new road in the late 1980's, and if construction is not delayed, the entire 65-mile loop will run north and south from I-85 in University City to I-85 near the Charlotte International Airport. However, several sections of I-485 important to Concord and the surrounding region are already completed or in progress. The I-85/US29/Hwy 49 connectors on I-485 just south of Concord in the Concord Mills Mall area provide much improved access to Charlotte and surrounding areas. Construction was recently completed on I-485, between NC 49 south and southwest to I-77, ensuring shorter and easier trips to Pineville, Rock Hill and Columbia, SC. These sections create an entirely new set of development possibilities. The northern most section of I-485, from I-85 to Statesville Road in North Mecklenburg County, is scheduled to begin construction around 2013, with ultimate completion in 2017 according to NCDOT. See Figure V-B-3 for I-485 map and construction schedule for remaining segments of the highway.

Both of the aforementioned transportation plans are consulted during review of proposed developments.

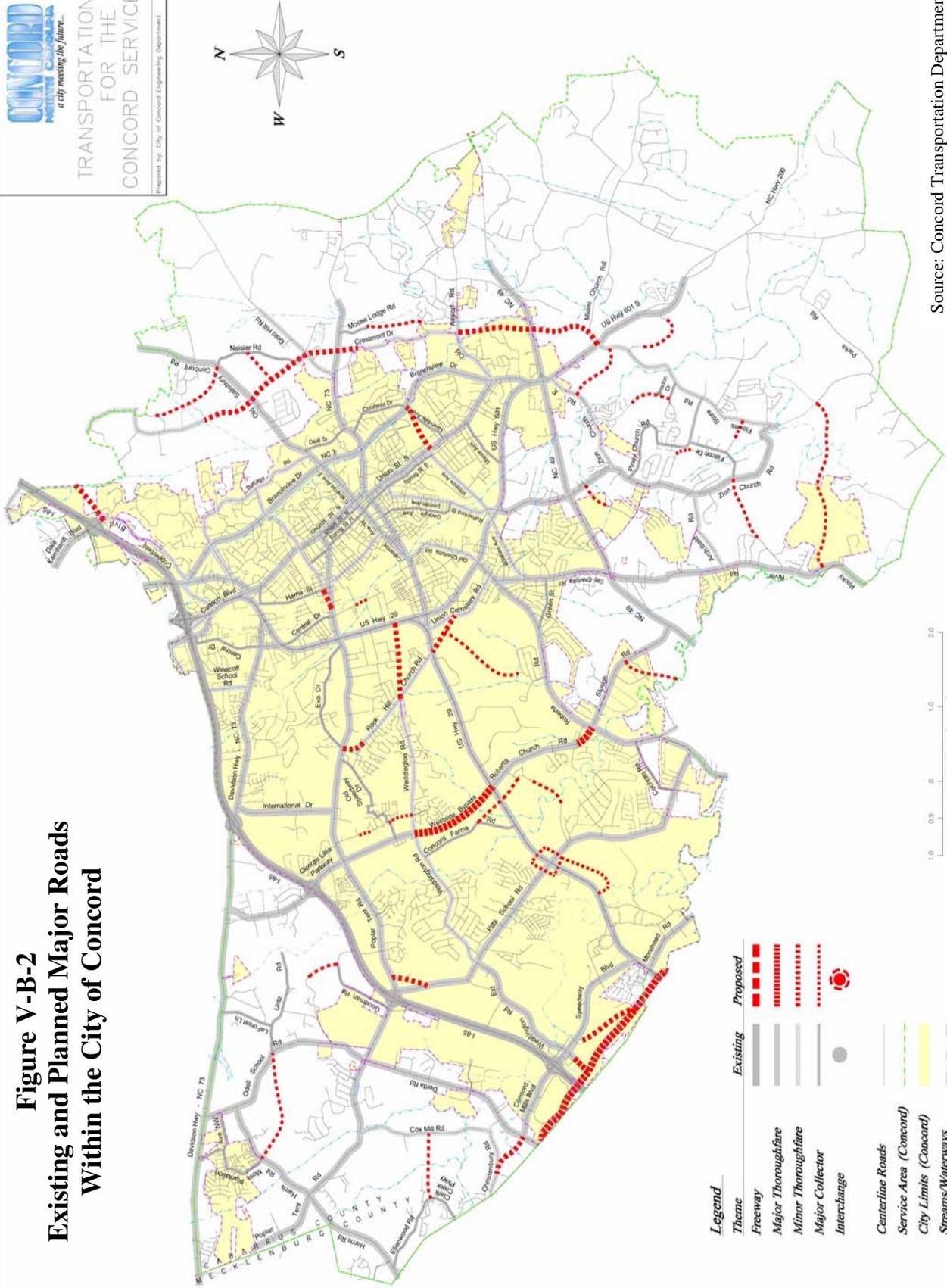
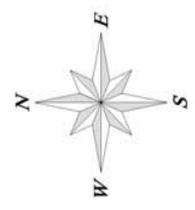
Figure V-B-1





TRANSPORTATION PLAN  
FOR THE  
CONCORD SERVICE AREA

Prepared by: City of Concord Engineering Department January 26, 2025



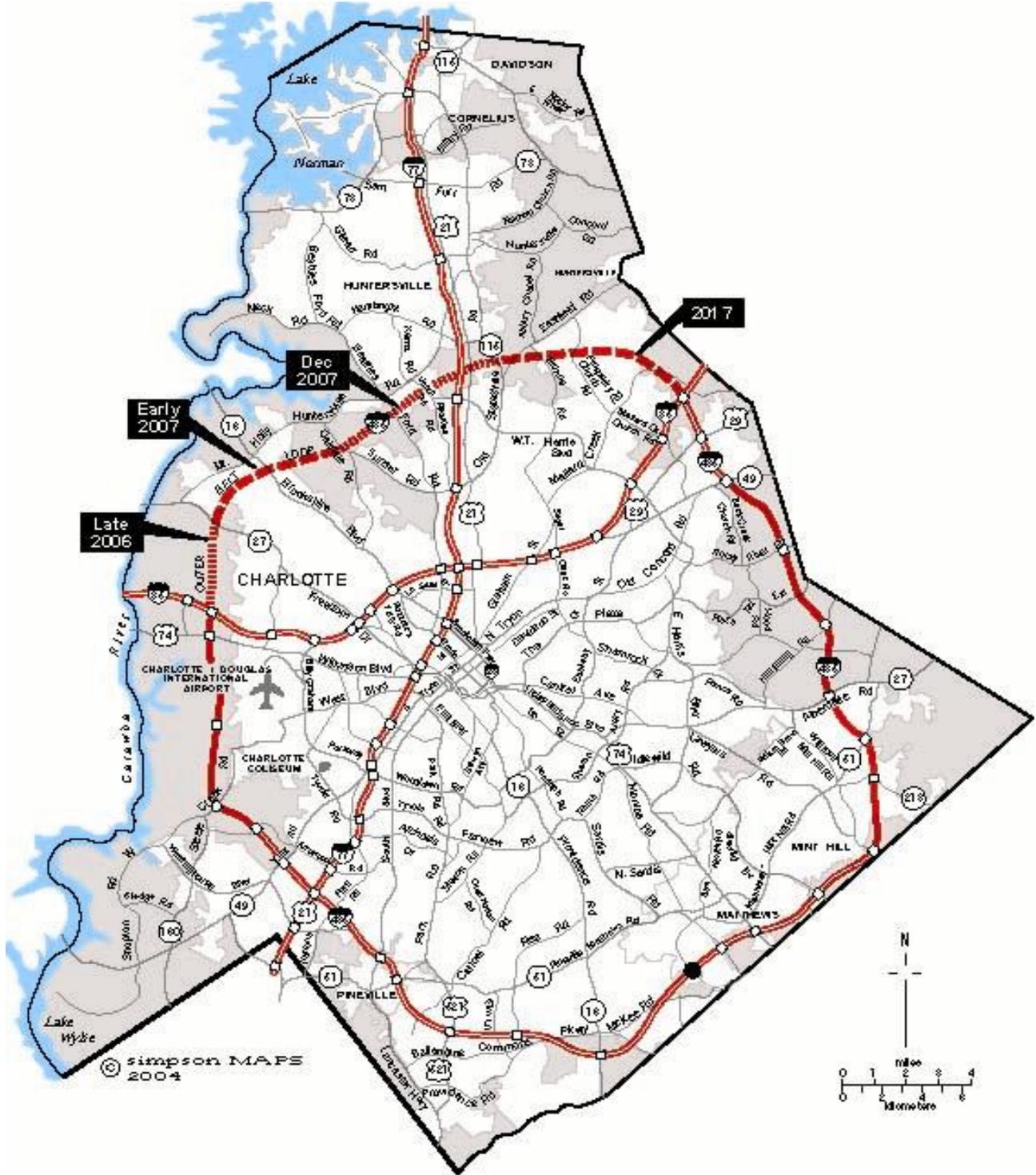
**Figure V-B-2**  
**Existing and Planned Major Roads**  
**Within the City of Concord**

- Legend**
- | Theme                  | Existing | Proposed |
|------------------------|----------|----------|
| Freeway                |          |          |
| Major Thoroughfare     |          |          |
| Minor Thoroughfare     |          |          |
| Major Collector        |          |          |
| Interchange            |          |          |
| Centerline Roads       |          |          |
| Service Area (Concord) |          |          |
| City Limits (Concord)  |          |          |
| Streams/Waterways      |          |          |

Graphic Scale (in Miles)  
0 0.5 1.0 1.5

Source: Concord Transportation Department

**Figure V-B-2  
I-485 Construction Schedule**



Source: NCDOT, September, 2006.

US Highway 29/601 (Concord Parkway) runs from northern Cabarrus County through Kannapolis and Concord, past the Carolina Mall, the NorthEast Medical Center and Lowe's Motor Speedway, and into downtown Charlotte. Traffic volume on US 29/601 within Concord ranges from 9,200 trips per day just south of Mills Avenue to 37,000 trips per day just north of its union with US Highway 601. US 29 separates from US 601 just north of Cabarrus Avenue, becoming Concord Parkway. Traffic volumes on US 29 (Concord Parkway) are fairly high, averaging between 23,000 trips per day just west of George W. Liles Parkway to 30,000 trips per day just west of Rock Hill Church Road. US 601 (Warren C. Coleman Boulevard S.) provides access to several business parks and commercial developments before connecting with Union Street (the former US 601 Business) and continuing through the southern-most portion of Cabarrus County and into Union County. Traffic counts on US 601 range from 13,000 trips per day just north of NC Highway 49 to 21,000 trips per day just south of Cabarrus Avenue. Church Street is the primary route to Downtown Concord while Union Street represents the main artery through downtown. Traffic counts on Church Street average from 10,000 trips per day just south of Cabarrus Avenue to 22,000 at Gibson Drive, while counts on Union Street range from 8,100 trips per day just south of Lawndale Avenue to 9,700 trips per day just north of Tribune Avenue.

North Carolina Highway 49 travels southwest through the southern areas of Concord, then through Harrisburg and the UNC-Charlotte area before continuing into Charlotte. Traffic volumes on NC 49 range from 12,000 trips per day just east of US 601 to 18,000 trips per day just east of Old Charlotte Road. Davidson Highway (NC Highway 73) enters Concord from I-77 and the Lake Norman area to the west, crosses over I-85 and continues through Mount Pleasant (the eastern-most municipality in the County), where it becomes known as Mt. Pleasant Highway and then into Stanly County. Traffic averages from 11,000 trips per day just east of US 601 to 21,000 trips per day at International Drive. State Highway 3 (Branchview Drive) runs from I-85 south to NC 73, and then continues as a local road to US 601, providing a bypass route from the Carolina Mall/NorthEast Medical Center area to the south end of the City. Traffic volume ranges from 9,800 trips per day just south of Lawndale Avenue to 21,000 just north of Cabarrus Avenue and just south of Copperfield Boulevard.

Several local roads are also important thoroughfares, providing access to residential, commercial and industrial areas of the City. Poplar Tent Road connects Concord Parkway to I-85, running east to west into Mecklenburg County to NC 73. This route is home to a large concentration of residential development. Traffic averages from 11,000 trips per day just east of George W. Liles Parkway to 17,000 trips per day at Concord Parkway. Weddington Road has recently been extended, running from the Speedway Boulevard area to Rock Hill Church Road and providing access to several large residential developments. Year 2000 traffic counts on Weddington Road range from 3,300 trips per day at Pitts School Road to 6,700 trips per day at George W. Liles Parkway. Speedway Boulevard is the fast developing connector between I-85 and US 29 near the western border of Concord, providing access to many present and proposed commercial developments. Copperfield Boulevard runs from I-85 to Branchview Drive (NC 3) near the northeast border of the City, providing access to numerous commercial and office developments. Cabarrus Avenue runs from Branchview Drive (NC 3) to Warren C. Coleman (US 601), connecting the east and west sides of Downtown Concord. Traffic on Cabarrus Avenue averages

from 6,400 trips per day near the eastern border of the City to 22,000 trips per day just east of Warren C. Coleman (US 601).

Several transportation upgrades and extensions are planned throughout the Concord area that will have a significant impact on land use. When completed, the George W. Liles Parkway will provide a connection from NC Highway 49 to I-85 and north along the Kannapolis Parkway to Davidson Highway (NC 73). The George W. Liles Parkway will extend from Davidson Highway (NC 73) (just north of Concord) southward, across I-85 and through Poplar Tent Road, Weddington Road and Concord Parkway (US 29) to NC 49. Existing roads included in the new George W. Liles Parkway will be widened and new sections will be constructed. In 2005 the widening project for I-85 between Charlotte and Speedway Boulevard was completed. The improvements to I-85 will improve traffic flow for commuters traveling in and out of Charlotte and will help reduce traffic congestion in the Concord Mills area. In September 2006 the NCDOT expects to complete the widening of NC Highway 49 from 2 to 4 lanes from Harrisburg to Zion Church Road and then on to Walker Road. The widening of NC 49 will help improve traffic flow to Charlotte from the Concord area, as well as from Mt. Pleasant and Albemarle.

A multi-jurisdictional team involving leaders from Cabarrus, Mecklenburg and Lincoln Counties, along with the Centralina Council of Governments and NCDOT, commenced a study for the NC 73 corridor, which serves as a major east-west connector for the region as well as an interstate connector between I-85 and I-77. The corridor currently consists of scattered residential development and farmland, however it is poised for rapid urbanized growth in the next 10 years. The NC 73 Transportation and Corridor Plan was completed in October 2004 addressing issues such as traffic volumes, access management, and land use coordination. The Plan goes beyond simply recommending various levels of road widening along the corridor, but incorporates urban design and context sensitive design solutions at certain locations. The NC 73 Transportation and Corridor Plan is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV.

Many local roadway and intersection projects are constructed through the City's Transportation Improvement Fund. This Fund essentially accelerates construction projects and addresses immediate needs, rather relying on State or Federal funds, which can take years to get the money. This Fund is also used to leverage Federal and State Funds for larger corridor projects.

#### **4. Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel**

Bicycle and pedestrian mobility is of particular interest to the Cabarrus and South Rowan Urban Area (CSRUA). An element of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the subsequent Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA 21) requires that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan be fully integrated within an urban area's Transportation Plan. Both federal requirements and strong local interest, initiated the region's first comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan, which was incorporated into the Livable Community Blueprint was developed for Cabarrus and South Rowan County. The plan encompasses the following CSRUA municipalities: Concord, Kannapolis, Landis, China Grove, and Harrisburg, as well as others not within the urban area boundary – Enochville and Midland. One of the primary goals of the *Livable Community Blueprint* is to “create a transportation plan that will provide for a diverse

and safe environment for bicycles and pedestrians to access a variety of destinations and services.” A survey conducted by the Cabarrus Rowan MPO in May of 2000 indicated that 48% of respondents wanted more bicycle paths.

The NCDOT has launched a project that uses signage to designate two bicycle routes totaling more than 150 miles. Routes 1 and 2 will join the existing Route 6, which is part of a State bicycle route that runs through the southwest corner of Cabarrus County. Although there are no immediate plans to construct paths or widen streets, the routes will be sited along roads that carry fewer than 1,500 cars per day. Because they will share the road with cars, the routes are designed for experienced riders. The NCDOT has marked the roadways with signs that include the route number, an advisory to motorists to share the road with cyclists, and bicycle crossing alerts. NCDOT has also provided a free brochure with a map of the routes and the location of connecting routes and historic sites.

Many people will agree that walking is both an enjoyable recreational activity and a reliable means to get to work, school, stores, and to recreation facilities. The *Livable Communities Blueprint* indicates that 49% of persons surveyed wanted sidewalks on all new roads. In addition to being part of an important goal of the Blueprint, providing walking trails, sidewalks and paths that connect to essential services and transit nodes can reduce vehicle trips and save energy. Connectivity of paths and greenways is a priority in the Blueprint. In 2006 the City, using its Transportation Improvement Fund as leverage, made corridor improvements to Church Street N. between Gibson Drive NW and Corban Ave. SE. The section between Gibson Dr. NW and Buffalo Ave. NW contained a multi-modal element by adding bike lanes in the roadway section. A second multi-modal pedestrian, bike, and vehicular improvement will come on line in 2007, with the corridor improvements to Cabarrus Avenue from US 601 (Warren C. Coleman Boulevard S.) to Old Charlotte Road.

The City of Concord currently has in excess of 109 miles of sidewalks, mostly concentrated in the Center City area and within subdivisions throughout the City. Concord has a sidewalk policy in place that enables a Pedestrian Improvement Committee of citizens and city staff to make annual capital recommendations for new and fill-in sidewalks along existing streets that identify where the greatest needs exist. The policy includes a formal request process and a point system for prioritizing requests based on pedestrian need. Greater emphasis is given for areas where high pedestrian traffic is generated by destination points such as schools or parks. Connectivity to existing sidewalks also contributes to priority, as does prior use as an unpaved but well-used path. Recommendations for pedestrian improvements are sent to the Pedestrian Improvement Committee for review and recommendation to the City Council.

The *Livable Community Blueprint* identifies extensive bicycle and pedestrian systems for the City of Concord. The major north-south connectors are designated routes that generally run along creeks and the river. Others connect east-west along roads or off-road through undeveloped land. In rural areas natural connections between larger undeveloped open space areas such as regional, state or national parks have been preserved and termed “greenways.” In urban and suburban areas, narrower corridors connect natural or man-made features and provide

alternative transportation routes and recreational sites accommodating such activities as picnicking, jogging, walking, biking or equestrian paths.

*Livable Community Blueprint* Bike and Pedestrian priorities for the City of Concord include:

1. **Concord Route** – Downtown Spur from Three Mile Branch through stormwater management property to Union Street (0.8 miles)
2. **Concord Route (Village Greenway)** – Irish Buffalo Creek Spur from Corban Ave to McGill Street connecting the Boys and Girls Club and the Academy Center (1.1 miles). Funding is identified for the project and bids will go out for construction in the Fall of 2006.
3. **Harold B. McEachern Phase 2 and 3** (Three Mile Branch Corridor) – Country Club Drive to Les Myers Park (4.5 miles)
4. **Rocky River Greenway Phases 1 and 2** (from State Highway 29 upstream to Derita Road)
5. **Afton Run/Coddle Creek** – J. Dorton Park to Hwy. 29 (3.2 miles)
6. **Weddington Hills Connection** – Weddington Hills Elementary north to Coddle Creek (1.4 miles)

The City is working closely with citizen groups and through the Parks and Recreation Department to establish bikeways and pedestrian ways. One current project establishes a 1 mile greenway along Three Mile Branch near Les Myers Park (McCachern Greenway Phase 1) opened in November 2004. Another project incorporates a greenway component to connect the Old Electric Depot (a brownfield) near Irish Buffalo Creek to the Boys and Girls Club (see Item 2 above). A new civic park J.W. McGee Jr. Park opened in January 2005 is located at northwest corner of Corban Avenue and Branchview Drive, and serves as a focal point along the Three Mile Branch bicycle and pedestrian trail.

## **5. Transit**

Envision Cabarrus is a partnership effort among local governments and the regional Chamber of Commerce, who have appointed the Envision Cabarrus Steering Committee to develop a vision for the County for the next 20 years. A goal and recommendation of Envision Cabarrus is to “Ensure that bus transportation, light rail, and commuter rail are implemented in Cabarrus County and the region in order to meet air quality standards and enhance transportation efficiency. These elements should be integrated with I-85 widening and other road construction so that transportation infrastructure is concurrent with growth.” Several existing and proposed transit initiatives in Concord and the surrounding region will enable the City to meet their objectives in the provision of transit. Details regarding these transit initiatives are provided below.

The Cabarrus County Transportation System (CCTS) provides public transportation for elderly and low-income residents to human service agencies and organizations based in Cabarrus County. The majority of CCTS trips occur within Cabarrus County, however, medical trips are provided out-of-county on a limited basis. CCTS also provides trips to the general public upon request. Human service agencies participating in the system are charged for transportation services for their clients on a per-mile basis. The charge to human service providers was \$1.45 per mile during FY 1999-2000. Currently, the one-way fare for a demand response trip for the general public is based on the distance traveled and the per-mile rate. Shared incidental trips were more common, because they involved transporting people who were going in the same direction as the scheduled van trip, and the per-mile charge does not vary by the number of people in the vehicle. A considerable share of the funding for CCTS is supported by a Community Transportation Program Grant, which is administered by the Public Transportation Division of NCDOT. The system operates during normal business hours, five days a week. The CCTS 21 van fleet provides approximately 225,000 miles of service each year. CCTS is also contracted to provide Complementary Paratransit services for the Rider Transit System. This service is provided for those unable to navigate the regular transit system and live within ¾ mile of an existing bus route. The cost is \$2 for those that qualify. Need to get updated info from Cabarrus County

The Community Transportation Program (CTP) provides service for the Department of Aging and the Department of Social Services and is open to the general public. The County contracts with a private service provider on a per mile rate basis (present rate of \$1.45/mile). The service provider operates under a turn-key rate system and the County leases the vans to the operator for the system. Cabarrus County received approval for a full time staff position from NCDOT which is funded by a 80/10/10 funding agreement. The position will provide direction and oversight for the CTP and other County public transportation services and grant programs. Need to get updated info from Cabarrus County

On February 1, 1999, Concord and Charlotte began a publicly subsidized commuter transit service. The Concord Express service includes the Cloverleaf Shopping Center in Kannapolis and The Village Shopping Center in Concord on the northern segment and downtown Charlotte on the southern terminus. The Cities of Charlotte and Concord provide local funds to support the operation of the service. The service is contracted by a private provider and provides 5 trips in the morning peak period and 5 in the afternoon. The route is primarily along US 29 with intermediate stops at UNCC and at a park-and-ride lot at the Lowe's Motor Speedway. Since service inception in February of 1999, ridership has increased each month, with the latest figures showing more than 6570 riders per month, which continues to be the most successful of the six regional express routes operated by the Charlotte Area Transit System. Officials with the City of Charlotte and the City of Concord indicate that they are very pleased with the public response. The initial service was funded with a grant from the Public Transportation Division of the NCDOT and matching funds from the Cities of Concord and Charlotte. Passengers are charged for each trip, which results in a fare-box recovery of about 20% of the total cost. Currently the Cities of Concord and Charlotte share in funding of the Concord Express service.

A Transit Implementation Plan was prepared for the Cabarrus Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization in June of 2002 and is a follow-up to the recommendations of the 1999 Transit Feasibility Study. The purpose of the planning process was to develop a start-up plan for public transportation services in the Cabarrus Rowan urban area. This extensive study included the design of transit routes and schedules, a review of organizational and operational approaches from similar-sized systems in North Carolina, stakeholder interviews, and regular meetings of a sub-committee of the Cabarrus Rowan Technical Coordinating Committee.

The plan proposed a two-phase implementation of transit services. Phase I services would include six routes radiating from a transit hub that would be located in the vicinity of the Carolina Mall and the NorthEast Medical Center. One bus would be assigned to each route, and the routes would be interconnected at the hub, creating three pairs of routes. This interlining of routes is intended to minimize the need for passenger transfer. Buses will operate every hour on all six of the routes, using a pulse system to facilitate transfers between routes at the transit hub. In Phase II, the routes will be expanded to serve additional towns in the Cabarrus Rowan Area. Only one route in Phase II directly affects Concord – the Harrisburg Connection. The bus serving the Harrisburg Connection will also operate every hour, in coordination with the buses in Phase I and the other 3 buses proposed under Phase II. Figure V-B-3 illustrates Phase I of the transit system and the proposed Phase II route to serve the City of Concord.

All needs to be updated

### **Actual Phase I Routes**

- **Orange Route.** Beginning at the transit hub, the Orange Route serves Downtown Concord, Barber-Scotia College, and the Cabarrus Senior Center. Stops include the Cabarrus County Courthouse, U.S. Post Office, Senior Center, and Barber-Scotia College. It also serves residential areas along Lincoln Street and Old Charlotte Road in Concord.
- **Purple Route.** The Purple Route serves multiple bus stops along US-29 from Davidson Ave. south to the Concord Commons Shopping Center. It also serves the communities on Kerr, Cabarrus, Central, and McGill Aves., as well as Rowan-Cabarrus Community College located on US-29 and the Super-K Shopping Center.
- **Yellow Route.** The Yellow Route serves significant multi-family developments located along NC-73 in Concord as it connects to Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. This route also services the Social Security Office, DMV, ESC and communities in Kannapolis along Rte. 29A.
- **Red Route.** The Red Route offers non-stop bus service from the transit hub to Carolina Mall, and then down I-85 to the Concord Mills Mall/Speedway Blvd. area. This includes stops at the hotels and restaurants off of exit 49.

- **Blue Route.** The Blue Route is primarily a loop route located within Kannapolis and connects to the Green Route at DSS. The route services Downtown Kannapolis and the new Amtrak passenger station. The route connects to the Cannon YMCA and the Murdock Senior Citizen Center. Areas served by the route include Midway (Rainbow Drive) and the Rowan County portion of Kannapolis (Rose Hill). It will also serve the Bio-Tech Research Park once it is completed.
- **Green Route.** This route connects the Blue Route to the Transit Hub in Concord. The Green Route travels from DSS in Kannapolis to the main hub along NC-3 (Lake Concord Road), it serves Northlite Shopping Center, Cloverleaf Plaza, Northeast Medical Center and several medical facilities located on Penny Lane and LePhillip Court.

### **Proposed Phase II Route**

- **Harrisburg Connection.** The proposed service to Harrisburg would connect to the Red Route at Concord Mills. The route will travel along Speedway Boulevard and Morehead Road, providing service to Lowe’s Motor Speedway. The route’s terminus in Downtown Harrisburg would provide service to existing and proposed commercial areas and several residential neighborhoods in the Town.

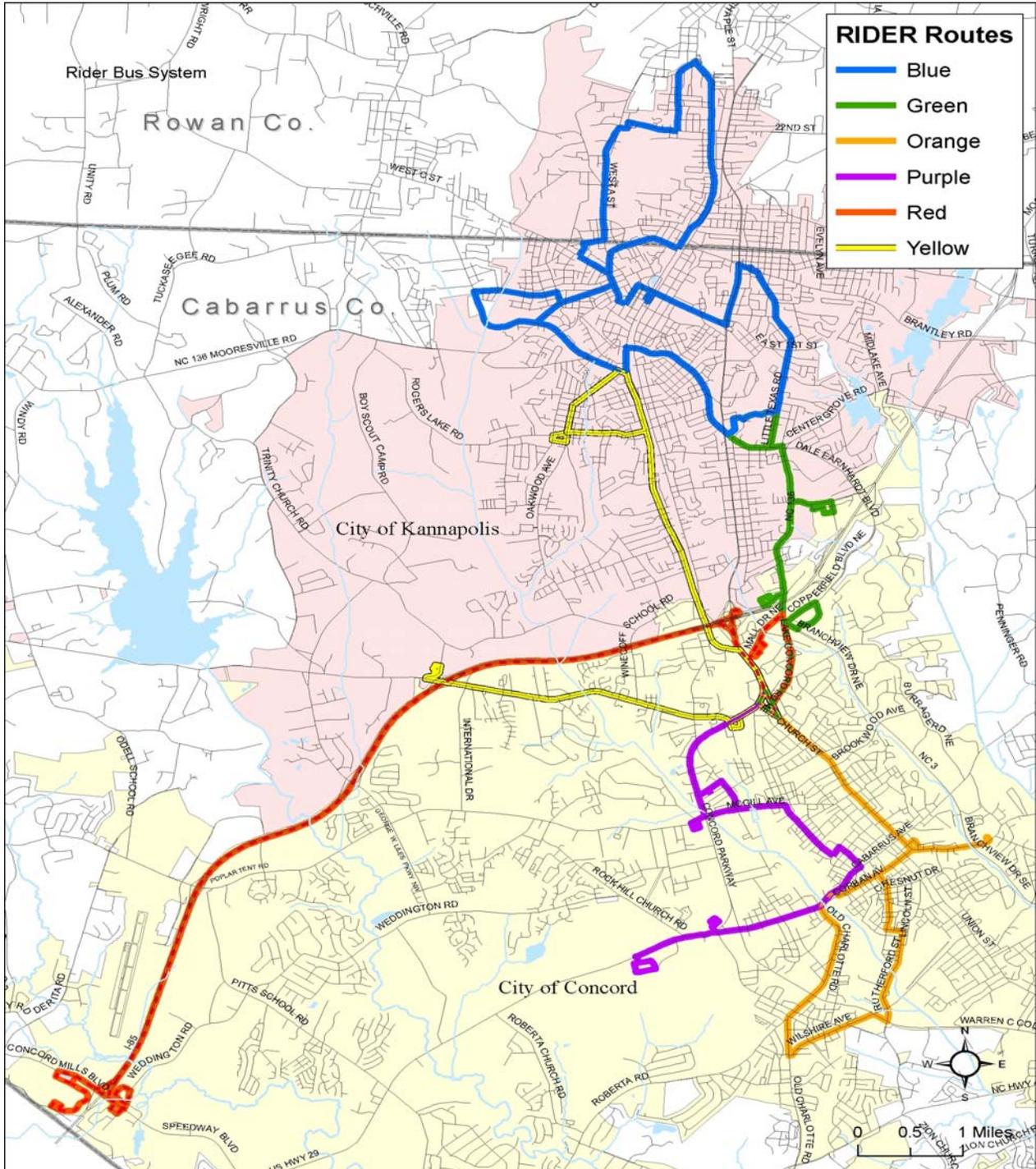
The Concord Kannapolis Transit Commission (CKTC) was created to provide planning and policy oversight roles for the public transportation system. The CKTC has been established with voting members from Concord and Kannapolis and non-voting representatives from other jurisdictions in the Cabarrus- Rowan urban area, and NCDOT. A Citizen’s Advisory Committee has also been established to make suggestions or recommendation to the CKTC on public transit services. The Committee includes representatives of organizations interested in transit services, major employers, and transit users.

The Cities of Concord and Kannapolis have entered into an inter-local agreement to establish a centrally governed and managed fixed-route public transportation system for Cabarrus and Rowan Counties. Concord is the lead agency and will own all transit capital assets, with Kannapolis contributing a pro-rata share of operating/administrative expenses based on the annual miles of service operated in the cities. Concord employs a transit manager who, in conjunction with the City and MPO staff, is responsible for transit administration. This system is known as RIDER and began service in April 2004.

The 2025 Charlotte Area Transit System staff recommendations to the Metropolitan Transit Commission indicates a combination Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line/enhanced bus service line along the Interstate 85 corridor that would be completed within twenty-five years and a Light Rail Transit (LRT) line that would go to the I-485 Outer belt within fifteen years. In light of these important mass transit improvements for the Charlotte region, Concord will want to explore other forms of transit such as the proposed bus system could connect commuters to a main terminal just inside the County near the Speedway. In fact, Concord’s City Council intends to have a feasibility study done that would examine extending the Northeast Light Rail Transit

Line from its planned terminus at Salome Church in Mecklenburg County into, and possibly through, Concord.

**Figure V-B-3**  
**City of Concord Transit Routes**



The Concord Regional Airport (CRA) is located 15 minutes west of Downtown Concord and 15 minutes from Charlotte's business district. Ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> busiest airport in North Carolina, CRA is a \$60 million dollar investment generating \$1 million in taxes on aircraft alone. In 2000-2001, the operations at the airport totaled 79,650, of which 56,000 were transient. CRA is a full service general aviation airport designed to serve the Cabarrus County area and is a reliever airport to Charlotte/Douglas International Airport according to FAA airport definitions. The airport's 12,500 square foot terminal is equipped with all the necessities for business and pleasure travelers. Available amenities include conference rooms, on-site rental cars, hotel arrangements, catering, and other business-assistance services. Office space is also available for lease and there is abundant aircraft storage on-site. Concord Regional Airport is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Concord Regional Airport also has major expansion plans and is in the process of developing an *Airport Master Plan*. Construction on a 1,900 foot extension to the CRA's 5,500 foot runway began in March of 2003, with a targeted completion in 2 years. The runway extension will be built north of the current runways to service existing customers of the airport better, and will attract some flights that currently go to the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport. This expansion will enable the airport to expand its operations and will significantly impact the future of the airport. This growth will also have significant impact on surrounding land uses and the road network particularly since the CATS plan calls for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line along Interstate-85 to the Concord Mills area. In addition to the BRT the completion of I-485 will provide greater access to the CRA. Additional information included in Chapter III, section F7 of this document also discusses the noise contour information and the Airport Overlay District included in the UDO.

It is critical that compatible land uses develop within the vicinity of the Concord Regional Airport. The Airport area is attracting professional and technical firms that provide jobs to Concord. The Several NASCAR race teams have located major facilities and even their headquarters in the Airport, Oakmont, and West Winds industrial parks. These development have also produced spin off companies that directly support the racing industry. One such project, the HAAS Wind Tunnel, has located on a tract to the east of the airport off of Ivy Cline Road. This facility, one of only two in the United States, allows aerodynamic testing on a rolling surface for race cars. It is expected that this facility will attract numerous race teams to conduct testing on their cars.

Located near the border of North and South Carolina, the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport is easily accessible from the entire Charlotte region, including Concord. It is approximately 30 miles from the City of Concord to Charlotte/Douglas International Airport. The Charlotte/Douglas International Airport is owned and operated by the City of Charlotte, and averages 500 daily flights and 22 million passengers annually. Charlotte/Douglas International Airport is ranked among the nation's top airports (20<sup>th</sup> nationwide in total operations and total passengers) and serves commercial, cargo, corporate, private, military and trucking operations.

## **7. Rail Service**

Freight service in Cabarrus County is provided by Norfolk-Southern Railway and Aberdeen, Carolina and Western. The main rail line is operated by Norfolk-Southern and runs through

Harrisburg in southern Cabarrus County and then north along US 29 through Concord and Kannapolis. Norfolk-Southern also operates a line that follows Highway 52 through the northeastern section of Cabarrus County. The secondary rail server – Aberdeen, Carolina & Western – has a short stretch of track in the southern section of Cabarrus County.

In addition, a 477-mile high-speed rail corridor running from Washington, DC to Charlotte has been designated as one of eight national rail corridors currently identified for improvement to high-speed status under Transportation Equity Act of the Twenty First Century (TEA-21). When completed, the corridor will provide rapid ground travel along the east coast, with easy access to Concord residents at the Kannapolis station.

In January 1999, the NCDOT Rail Division conducted a study that addressed the need for commuter rail service. The purpose of the study was to identify potential rail commuter corridors throughout the State that would serve a sizeable suburban population with a substantial central city. Future commuter/passenger rail planning in the urban area may include the Northeast Transit System, which would be connected to, and be part of the Charlotte Transit System. The “Red Line” would become a major “spine” of the entire light rail system. Running from northeast to southwest in the CSRUA, this line begins at the Cannon Village Station in downtown Kannapolis and continues parallel to the Norfolk-Southern railroad tracks toward Concord. The line crosses I-85 and continues along US Highway 29 past the Carolina Mall and NorthEast Medical Center. The line would also travel through west Concord and pass by the Philip-Morris industrial complex and Lowe’s Motor Speedway to the Cabarrus/Mecklenburg county line just north of I-485. The proposed rail service would continue into the Charlotte Metro area and provide service to the Gaston Urban Area. This plan/proposal is in the study stages in concert with various other light rail initiatives in the metro region.

## **8. Ports**

Companies in the inland Charlotte Region have access to two North Carolina ports and one port in Charleston, South Carolina. Close and easy access to these ports makes the Concord area very attractive to enterprises that ship and receive goods internationally. The Wilmington Port is one of the few US South Atlantic ports with rail service running directly through its container yard. This on-site rail access provides a cost-saving alternative to transporting containers from the docks to a distant railway. The Morehead City Port is located four miles from the Atlantic Ocean along the Newport River. This smaller facility is used primarily for handling bulk cargo and does not have container handling capabilities.

The Port of Charleston, South Carolina, is the largest port along the Southeast and Gulf coasts and ranks fourth nationwide. Charleston ranks as the nation's sixth busiest seaport in dollar value of shipments. The SC Ports Authority operates four Charleston terminals – Union Pier, Columbus Street, Wando Welch and North Charleston. A future terminal to expand capacity is planned with the location as yet undetermined. Another global transportation facility is located in Kinston, North Carolina. The Global Transpark is an airport facility that offers cargo and shipping company’s access to an 11,500 foot long commercial runway, which is the largest in North Carolina. New cargo facilities have already been built and more sites are available to meet

increased demand. Located 225 east of Concord, this facility gives companies access to the global market place via air transportation.

## **9. Summary**

The phenomenal growth the City of Concord has experienced recently has strained the areas transportation infrastructure, particularly the roadway network. Population projections indicate that this will continue. More and more subdivisions are being developed in outlying areas along roadways never designed to accommodate a large amount of traffic volume. This is creating more congestion, loss of quality of life, and lower levels of service (LOS) driving conditions. The highway system is also becoming increasingly congested. According to projected traffic counts, the widening project on I-85 south of Speedway Boulevard will already be at capacity once completed and opened to motorist. Concord along with surrounding jurisdictions and other agencies need to continue working together to address transportation issues.

Transportation is a key component for economic development and growth. A congested, inadequate transportation network will eventually drive existing business away and make it less desirable for new business to locate here as it will affect productivity by increasing travel times for their workforce.

Transportation and access affect land use patterns and vice versa. A well-planned transportation network can direct land use patterns into desired corridors or regions. Compact and mixed land uses offering transit and pedestrian mobility can also reduce vehicle trips and distances. A comprehensive multi-modal approach tied to land use planning is needed to address the future transportation needs of the community. The land use plan was prepared in concert with planned roadway, transit, and pedestrian networks.

Recognizing the need for a quality transportation network, the City established the Transportation Improvement Fund. This fund is primarily used to accelerate and leverage construction of immediately needed projects in various locations within the City. Without this fund, some projects may not get funded for many years. Fuel costs rose significantly since the adoption of the original land use plan in 2004. This fact has caused an increase in transit ridership of the CCTS system. Additionally, people may become more conscience of their driving habits by combining trips. Higher fuel costs may also encourage and support more mixed-use developments, offering people the opportunity to local service oriented trips without an automobile. This also has the added benefit of improving air quality. Overall, the City strongly considers transportation of all forms as growth continues.