

Mecklenburg Livable Communities

Accessibility Think Tank: Meeting 1

Developing Partnership Alliance (DPA) and Tone Setting

1. What type of atmosphere would you like during our time together?
 - a. Playful
 - b. Open
 - c. Build upon each other's ideas
 - d. Collaborative
2. What can you count on from each other, what commitments can you offer each other?
 - a. Good listening
 - b. Openness
 - c. Sharing experiences
 - d. Honest – especially with responsibilities, if you can't do something, say it and don't try to be nice
 - e. Play devil's advocate – give candid feedback
3. How do you want to be when it gets difficult?
 - a. Respectful
 - b. Identify that you may need a sidebar
 - c. Don't be territorial
 - d. Be interest based
4. What does success look like?
 - a. We end up doing more than we would have done without this project
 - b. Lots of use
 - c. National recognition or recognition outside of region
 - d. Increased budget
 - e. At least one new collaborative effort between organizations
 - f. Cross marketing: being aware of what others are doing
 - g. Mobility needs of county residents are being met
 - h. Develop measurable goals
 - i. Higher scores on relevant indices, like walkability
 - j. Positive social media chatter

Represented Partners & Their Current Initiatives Report-Outs

Active Charlotte: Charlotte has been selected to be the site for the 2016 Paralympic Trials for swimming, track and field, and cycling. They will be looking to utilize fields and facilities that are available.

Carolina Thread Trail: Partnering with Cross-Charlotte Trail; creating a master plan for the Thread Trail

Catawba Lands Conservancy: Focusing preservation efforts on a wide portfolio of lands

Centralina Council of Governments: Volunteer transportation program for adults with disabilities, veterans, and older adults

Charlotte Department of Transportation: Open to collaboration on the Charlotte Walks, Charlotte Bikes, and Transportation Action plans that need to be updated. Implementing big public engagement efforts with the planning process because if many members of the community are involved in this project, it will demonstrate that the public is interested and invested in community accessibility.

Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services: Looking to increase the number of sites at which services are provided, and working to provide transportation options for those they serve; looking to partner with cab companies that will provide transportation. Look to increase partnership with CATS to get people to medical appointments and provide transportation in general.

Sierra Club of Central Piedmont: They are involved in many different planning projects. Also involved in commenting on state legislation.

Huntersville Greenways and Trails: promoting increased mileage of “dirtways”– more affordable than greenways

Sustain Charlotte:

- Organizing the Transportation Choices Alliance – an alliance with different organizations that aim to increase opportunities for transit in Charlotte.
- Partnering with Mecklenburg County Air Quality on Clean Commute Challenge.
- Installed bike racks as part of sustainable neighborhoods program.
- Walkability challenge in Plaza Midwood.
- Just hired a bicycle program director – try to help make Charlotte more bike friendly.

Veterans/Military Affairs with Carolinas Healthcare System: Charlotte bridge home – transition assistance program for veterans (for example assistance with getting housing). Organizations that have anything to do with veterans or military personnel is able to join this alliance of organizations – NC Serves.

McColl Center:

- Partners a lot with the community artists.
- Artists in residence - artists come for three months at a time. As part of this program, the artists have to do some sort of community engagement.
- Relationship with Carolinas healthcare – have artists that work in the healthcare environment (i.e. showcasing a cancer survivor’s journey through art)
- Partners with Urban Ministry and Moore Place
- Environmental Artists in Residence program – artists create projects in parks or neighborhoods that also have a message behind them.
- Innovation institute – connect to business and professional community to help leaders in the community understand artistic and innovative potential

Healthy Charlotte Initiative (Started by Charlotte Chamber): Goal of initiative is to have Charlotte ranked as the healthiest community nationally. Want to reach into the business community for partners.

Centralina Council of Governments: innovation corridors: identify transit corridors. High performance broadband. Reinforce rural-urban connection.

AARP:

- Want to ensure that cities are prepared for older populations – raise visibility of age friendliness.
- Network of age friendliness – partnership with World Health Organization. Have a network finding out best practices around different cities and across the country.
- Talking to CDOT in relation to mobility.
- Livable Charlotte Week (October 12).
- Run with AARP –work with people ages 50+ who are active runners to raise their profile and talk about healthy free opportunities like greenway.
- AARP Livability Index – A tool to see how a particular neighborhood ranks in different categories i.e. access to transportation, food, healthcare, etc.

Mecklenburg County Air quality: goal is to meet and maintain healthy air standards. Want to address vehicle exhaust. Clean commute campaign – reduce number of miles traveled.

Davidson Lands Conservancy

Davidson Lands Conservancy is a nonprofit land trust that works with willing landowners to save land in the Davidson, North Carolina area in order to preserve a healthy, natural environment for future generations. The Davidson Lands Conservancy works to PROTECT valuable land, EDUCATE the public about the benefits of conservation, and ADVOCATE on behalf of our ecosystems.

Gaps & Root Cause Discussion

What gaps exist?

- Physical gaps between infrastructure (i.e. physically can't get to a bus stop because sidewalks don't exist)
- No connectivity between trails and roads
- As the County grows, it's hard for people outside of Charlotte to access services because everything is located in Uptown Charlotte: public transit gaps especially for services
- Fragmented bike lanes
- Lack of money
- Not promoting services well
- Time and money not used efficiently
- Difficult to get things done because of money
- Show need/demand for services

Why do these gaps exist?

- Expertise: people exist in their bubbles, so it's difficult to get people to collaborate

- Perception: people don't realize the economic benefit of easy access to transit
- Who is in charge to ensure change happens
- Concern for safety – perception issues
- Lack of public awareness
- Life cycle of infrastructure – long time between development of infrastructure
- NCDOT's funding program heavily favors highways instead of bus paths and sidewalks
- People don't have the long term in mind, people often only think about today or tomorrow
- Neighborhoods or municipalities don't want transit in their areas
- Millennial leaning towards more transit options, and older generations not letting go of their cars – generational issues in preferences

Ideas for New Collaborative Initiatives

Initiative: Marketing campaign to promote use of walking/biking/transit and to encourage funding for infrastructure

Initiative: Promote the availability of Wi-Fi on transit

Initiative: New programing in school curriculum that promotes walking/bicycling safety

Initiative: Create a directory of organizations that provide transportation services and provides an interactive flowchart that determines an individual's best path to their destination

Initiative: "New Guide to Charlotte" that serves as a guide to detailed information on getting around Charlotte without a car

Initiative: Bike Mentorship Program that pairs new riders with experienced riders who know how to travel around Charlotte using a bike

Initiative: Establish a way to link people and organizations to promote more alignment

Initiative: Establish a program that promotes a greater sense of connection to the Mecklenburg Community (pride in place, increased community involvement and volunteering)

Ideas for Expanding Current Initiatives

Current Initiative: Charlotte Department of Transportation planning (Charlotte Walks, Charlotte Bikes, and Transportation Action Plan)

Current Initiative Owner: Charlotte Department of Transportation

Collaboration Opportunity: Any community stakeholder, McColl Center for Art & Innovation, Health Groups, AARP

Current Initiative: Healthy Charlotte

Current Initiative Owner: Charlotte Chamber of Commerce

Potential Collaborative Partners: Sustain Charlotte, Safe Rides Charlotte, Carolina Thread Trail, AARP, Realtors, B-Cycle

Current Initiative: Programs for citizens in need
Current Initiative Owner: Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services
Potential Collaborative Partners: CATS, Centralina Council of Governments

Current Initiative: Community Art & Accessibility Project
Current Initiative Owner: McColl Center for Art & Innovation
Potential Collaborative Partners: Charlotte Area Transit System, Centralina Council of Governments

Current Initiative: Kids' Education Programs
Current Initiative Owner: Safe Kids Charlotte
Potential Collaborative Partners: Healthy Charlotte, Town Chambers

Current Initiative: Dirtway Expansion
Current Initiative Owner:
Potential Collaborative Partners: Sierra Club, Charlotte Dept. of Transportation, Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation

Current Initiative: Age-Friendly Network
Current Initiative Owner: AARP
Potential Collaborative Partners: Chamber of Commerce Health Charlotte Initiative

Current Initiative: Volunteer Ride-Share
Current Initiative Owner: Centralina Council of Governments
Potential Collaborative Partners: Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, Ada Jenkins Center

Current Initiative: Safety Programs (personal, physical, community)
Current initiative Owner: Charlotte Department of Transportation
Potential Collaborative Partners: Safe Rides, Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services

Current Initiative: Walkability Challenge in Plaza Midwood
Current Initiative Owner: Sustain Charlotte
Potential Collaborative Partners: Centralina Council of Governments, Charlotte Planning Dept., AARP