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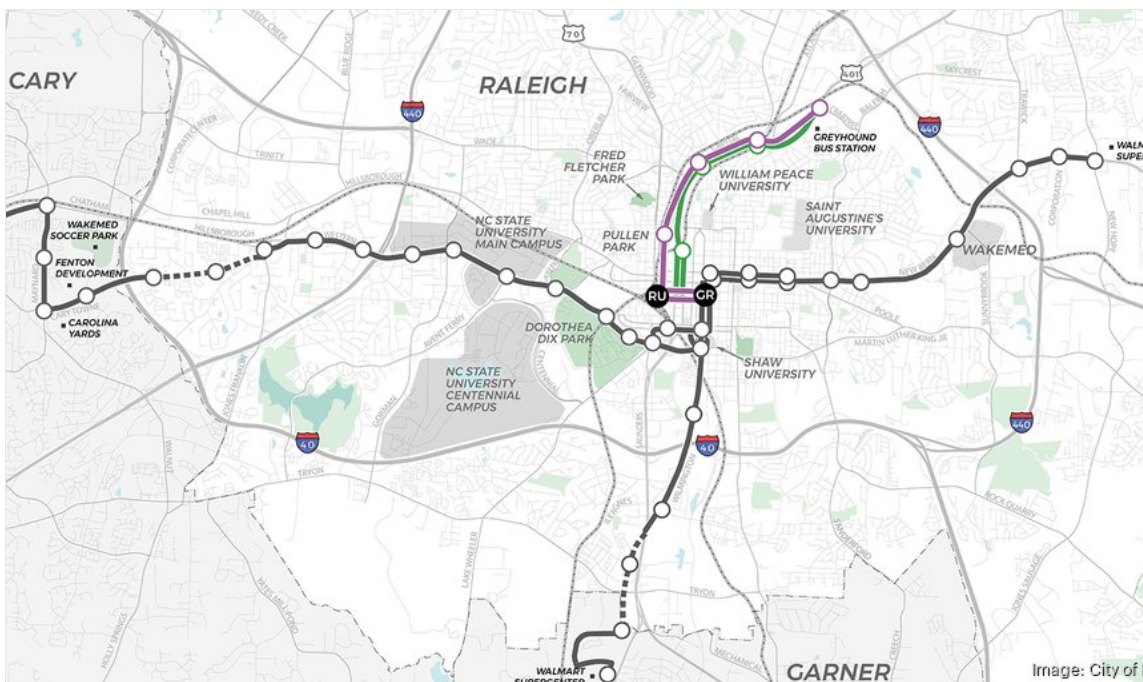
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Transportation

Raleigh moves closer to transformation of key transit cor



Map of the four corridors for the Bus Rapid Transit project in Raleigh and Wake County.

CITY OF RALEIGH



By **Lauren Ohnesorge** – Senior Staff Writer, Triangle Business Journal
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Transportation planners are in the final stages of preparation before construction begins along New Bern Avenue in Raleigh for **the region's first Bus Rapid Transit corridor**.

The first phase of the plan in Wake County is a 5.3 mile route connecting Downtown Raleigh with New Hope Road. The \$96 million vision for the corridor is a system of uninterrupted bus lanes separated from general traffic.

The city held a ceremonial groundbreaking last year, but the real construction has yet to start. In recent months, drivers may have noticed utility relocations starting along the

stretch. The next step is the bidding process, said Sam Brewer, a project manager with the city. It's usually a four to six week process as the city solicits contractors.

Brewer said the goal is get a bid award approved by the City Council this summer. Bid advertisements went out Tuesday and already the city has had "significant interest" from potential contractors, Brewer said. The city is hosting a meeting March 20 for anyone interested in bidding on the project.

How the project is phased out for construction is dependent on the contractor the city decides to hire. It's likely that the first task will be work on temporary lanes for a traffic shift.



The bus rapid transit will have dedicated bus lanes in many sections to allow for faster transit throughout the city.

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Once a contractor has been tapped, the city will convene a pre-construction meeting with the public in order to introduce the team and outline expectations.

If all goes as expected, the city hopes the stretch will be complete by the end of 2025.

Wake County voters approved investments in public transit back in 2016. The Wake County Transit Plan called for the buildout of 20 miles of transit lanes along four BRT corridors. Federal funding, as well as a half-cent sales tax in Wake County, will pay for the work.

Project proponents say the New Bern segment will provide vital connectivity on a key corridor into downtown. It's a path that goes past WakeMed Hospital, a major employer in the region. But there's been worry about gentrification as developers line up to take advantage of opportunities along the roadway, which also lines a historically African American neighborhood.

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On Tuesday, the city voted to approve a transit overlay district along the corridor that pushes developers to build affordable housing and walkable communities.

The other routes for Bus Rapid Transit are:

Wake BRT: Southern

- This phase of the project is currently in the design phase and is expected to be about 5 miles long, with dedicated bus lanes between Downtown Raleigh and Garner.

Wake BRT: Western

- This phase of the project is in the early design phase and is envisioned as 12 miles of dedicated lanes between Downtown Raleigh and downtown Cary.

Wake BRT: Northern

- The project is will connect Downtown Raleigh to Triangle Town Center and Midtown. Multiple route options are being examined, according to the city.