



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

October 21, 2025

2025-2026 Board Members

President Patrick Baker
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Past Pres Kim Brattain
Secretary Bill Gill
Treasurer Craig Field
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Directors 2025-2027

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Karen Calder
J Hill
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Mike Wollinger

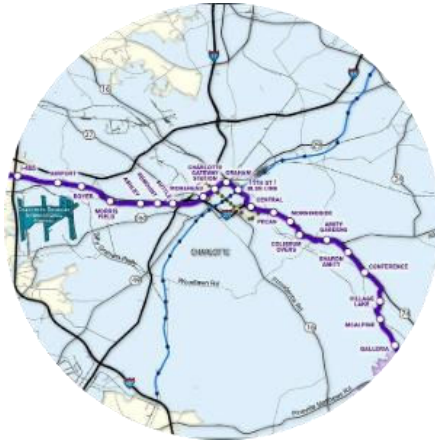
Membership Co-Chairs:

Linwood Bolles &
Shelley Dean

Foundation Stuart Hair

Programs

Elizabeth Teagarden



The Great Transit Debate: What's at Stake for Mecklenburg County?

by Paul Bartholomy

Charlotte Rotary hosted a “Transit Tax Referendum” panel moderated by Spectrum News anchor and political journalist Tim R. Boyum. Panelists included Charlotte City Council Transportation Committee Chair Ed Driggs; former Huntersville mayor John Aneralla; Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners Chair Mark Jerrell; community advocate Bob Clyde; attorney Larry Shaheen (The McIntosh Law Firm); Robert Dawkins (Action NC); JG Lockhart (host of podcast “The Fordcast with Jim Rico” and ED of The Network for Empowering Women & Men Everywhere); and Andrea Smith (Strategic Advisor, Charlotte Regional Business Alliance). The discussion reviewed the proposed one-cent sales tax to fund a 30-year mobility plan and create a new independent transit authority.

Supporters described the proposal as a long-term investment in quality of life, growth, and competitiveness. They said the region needs a dependable funding source to keep up with population growth and traffic congestion. The plan, approved by the state legislature for a public vote, would dedicate 40% of funding to rail, 20% to bus service, and 40% to roads. Backers emphasized the benefits of better sidewalks, lighting, traffic signal coordination, and bus shelters, along with new job opportunities. They also noted that much of the cost would be shared by visitors and businesses rather than only local residents, and they encouraged higher voter turnout for such an important local decision.

Opponents raised concerns about cost, accountability, and fairness. Some questioned whether past promises on transit had been met and whether the new system would deliver on what is being proposed. Others worried about safety, maintenance, and the financial burden of another countywide tax. Some argued that expanded rail lines might not reduce traffic and could lead to higher housing costs or displacement near new development. Suggestions were voiced for investing first in better bus service, road improvements, and more flexible transportation options like bus rapid transit or micro-transit before

committing to major rail expansion.

In questions and closing remarks, nonprofit funding pressures and the balance of community investments also came up. Supporters said the new authority and open appointment process should help build public trust and that Mecklenburg County can “walk and chew gum”, improving transportation while still supporting social services. Skeptics countered that public confidence must be earned through clear oversight, cost control, and near-term improvements. The meeting concluded with a call for voters to get informed, weigh long-term regional needs against near-term trade-offs, and participate in the upcoming referendum. The panel proved to be captivating, offering an exchange of perspectives that highlighted the many layers of Charlotte’s transportation future. There were clearly more questions of interest than time permitted – a reflection of just how compelling the transit issue has become for the Charlotte community.

Here is the recording:

With slides: <https://vimeo.com/1130373494?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Without slides: <https://vimeo.com/1129970809?fl=pl&fe=sh>

The introduction begins at about 10 mins and 30 secs.