



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

July 14, 2026

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Ed McKinney Special Assistant to the City Manager – Strategic Mobility

by **Susie Masotti**

On Tuesday, July 14th, the Charlotte Rotary Club was pleased to welcome Ed McKinney, Special Assistant to the City Manager for Mobility, Charlotte City Manager's Office, as this week's guest speaker. Rotary Club member **Benton Bragg** of Bragg Financial Advisors provided the introduction of Mr. McKinney. Benton told the gathered members and guests that Ed's career has spanned more than 30 years of both public and private experience in transportation, urban design and community planning. Having joined the City of Charlotte in 2013, Ed has served in leadership roles for both the planning and transportation departments, giving him a wealth of knowledge that incorporates two important aspects of Charlotte's leadership. In his current role, Ed is helping implement the vision for mobility to support Council's investment in housing affordability, workforce development and upward economic Mobility.

Ed is a native of Wisconsin with an undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in Architecture. He then went on to complete 2 master's degrees – one each in Architecture and City and Regional Planning. After spending 19 years in the private sector, he then joined the city of Charlotte's staff. Ed is married to his wife Joanne, and they have two children.

Ed thanked Benton for his introduction and thanked the gathered crowd for having him as this week's speaker. Obviously, with transportation being a huge discussion with the .01 cent tax increase, Ed said he had spoken many times to

groups like our Rotary Club and appreciated the opportunity to bring his message to update our membership.

The Mobility division of transportation's primary focus is on what we can do in and around our region's transportation and is an ongoing conversation that changes rapidly. Mobility's goal is to close the gap between housing and jobs while also making transportation safe, accessible and affordable. The 19.4 billion transportation and transit budget, plus the 5.9 billion matched by federal funds, is to be collected over the next 30 years. This is the largest economic development in our community, and it is the first time we have been able to convert and connect ideas to realization. The new 1-cent tax crosses all aspects of transit, including city transit and city roads. Roads will consist of \$5.7 billion of the City of Charlotte's budget as well as \$2.1 billion to towns (such as Davidson, Pineville, Matthews, etc.). Transit will utilize \$11.6 billion plus the remaining federal funds to fund the new Metro Public Transportation Authority. There is broad representation to take engagement in and to "outlying" areas.

Included are both bus and microtransit. 60% of riders spend about 15 minutes on buses. The new budget will enhance the 20,000 bus stops and the transportation hub. Microtransit represents curb-to-curb service and is an on-demand service like Lyft and Uber. Dollars will be spent on purchasing buses and microtransit cars as well as hiring drivers for both. Expanded bus hours on weekdays and weekends are also a primary focus.

The rail lines will also be improved and expanded. The new red line will be focused on over the next 10 years, the silver line over the next 15 – 20 years, and the existing gold and blue lines will finish out the project over the next 20 – 25 years. This is a huge expansion of the rail project.

40% of the budget is an investment in roads, with key areas being focused on new roads, widening projects, improvements, and lighting. Roads will receive \$102 million in Charlotte from our local budget and include \$5.7 billion in spending over the next 30 years.

Every community has different needs, and mobility is focused on that piece of the puzzle. The budget includes capital investment bonds (\$300 million). The challenge is to scale our forces on how we address each year.

In the next 5 years, there will be seven major road projects, which is a dramatic increase in productivity. The pool of potential projects includes working with the community and prioritizing each accordingly. The work development is being managed by a dashboard showing each project (current, future, and potential). The cities involved need buses and a workforce to make these projects happen. Currently, we need more buses and workforce to scale up. The trade gap is a challenge, and we're working on future pipelines for both those areas.

We need to be Skilled to Build! This includes workforce readiness, safe bus readiness, and contracting readiness. It will take the full community to make this possible. This work is created specifically to involve small businesses in training, starting, and completing a test of a solar streetlight project. Testing has already begun, and the goal is for that work to be completed on time and on budget.

With all this work, we must be in partnership with the communities we serve. The referendum was passed by just 52%, which is tight. We need to build confidence in our work to show that the faith the community has put in us was worth the investment.

Ed closed by thanking the gathered membership and guests and took a few questions from the group.

The first question was about how Ed's team plans to work to close the workforce development gap and the affordable housing gap together. Ed replied that they are committed to addressing this issue whenever possible. There is no magic solution, but through Bonds, we have funds to work with developers to protect naturally accessing affordable housing with transportation. We are lucky to have the growth, but we must work to remain vigilant in that goal.

Next, the question was asked about the Amtrak – the person asking the question had recently taken the Amtrak to Raleigh and felt he saw a movement back in usage. Ed replied that communication with Amtrak (a private entity) to redevelop and maximize the Amtrak location. All transport would have come from Amtrak. However, since this is a private system, mobility must work with them to make that project work. It is a piece of the puzzle.

The question was asked that most of the projects Ed had mentioned are retrofits to existing locations. How will mobility work with new projects (such as the River District) to plan rather than retrofit down the road? Ed answered that that kind of forward thinking is already underway. The extension of West Blvd. was part of the River District planning. Basic infrastructure when thinking about new development (in the River District and other areas such as Ballantyne) where the new structure we are working with is going to make it a workforce for public and private projects. They plan to work with all parties.

When asked about accountability in existing issues, Ed was given the example of South End, where there has been a huge expansion of housing and businesses, and South Blvd. is constantly being worked on. What is the city doing about water and sewer in those projects to keep up with existing areas like South End that are already overloaded? Ed replied that there is so much the public doesn't see – growth isn't necessarily seen, but areas such as water, sewer and stormwater are part of the road's progress as development comes.

Finally, Ed was asked about clawing back projects where money was spent on projects that have gone nowhere. What process is in place to keep that from continuing? Ed replied that

every decision is ultimately City Council's decision. Mobility's job is to make sure we're not moving ahead of council. Every decision made needs to be thought out from the past, the present, and the future. Additionally, Ed's team plans to connect with Council as members of the community speak out to address those issues.

A recording of the meeting can be found here:

With Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1209993920?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Without Slides: <https://vimeo.com/1209996042?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Ed's introduction begins at 30 minutes and 15 seconds.