



Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority Legislative Update

On Wednesday, June 15, 2016 I had the honor of introducing US Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx to speak to members of the North Carolina Public Transportation Association. He was a tremendous speaker and it is evident that the current administration is working diligently to improve public transportation throughout the country. His thoughts were also very relatable to Wave Transit and I was inspired to share his message with the board.

Secretary Foxx challenged us to demonstrate leadership to promote public transportation in the face of tremendous gridlock in Washington. Communities should stop waiting for Washington to lead the effort to improve public transportation. Secretary Foxx challenged communities and local governments to lead the effort for strong transit systems at the local and regional level, understanding the realities emanating from inside the beltway. The City of Wilmington has exhibited this leadership by providing the necessary funding for vehicles without waiting for federal assistance. In order for Wave Transit to be successful, we need to continue these types of efforts and lead at the local level while strongly advocating our elected leaders in Raleigh and Washington DC to fund transit at a level that allows us to thrive, not just survive.

The coming year will be a transformational one for the Authority and we need to be prepared to make important decisions that will impact public transportation in the region for many years to come. The Authority is well ahead of our peers in transit regionalization and we have benefitted from our efforts by receiving better than average federal support. We will remain diligent in our endeavors to secure federal and state funding but we will not survive if we continue to rely so heavily on outside financial assistance. We must find a way to increase local funding to support the transit initiatives that we as a community have identified. Continuing decreases in annual operating funding is a model that is unsustainable and without dedicated transit funding our day of reckoning is rapidly approaching.



*Wave Transit Executive Director Albert Eby and
US Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx*

Southwest Transit Association Executive Director Kristin Joyner drafted an excellent overview of Secretary Foxx's comments and I have included them below:

Symptom 1: Perpetuating the idea that people in urban areas don't care about the rural rings around the metropolis and highway-focused people don't care about those serving in transit. Continuing within our industry to focus on the splits as opposed to the solutions, keeps us in victim mode instead of telling our unique and powerful stories to force change.

CURE: "Tell the story, over and over, that a strong Federal investment helps rural and urban areas JOINTLY."

Symptom 2: Transportation is very jurisdictional. Think about how many counties, cities and MPO's one must travel through to go from Guthrie, OK to Oklahoma City, OK for dialysis, Love Field in Dallas, TX to Arlington, TX to see the Cowboys play or a trip to the VA in Albuquerque, NM from Española, NM. Transit project priorities get broken up and the effectiveness lost.

CURE: "Regions need to figure out a way to work together. I'm looking for regions that have figured out how to work together for great regional transit solutions."

CURE: "Think bigger and think TOGETHER".

Symptom 3: Underinvestment in transit. (Well, Mr. Secretary, we all knew that!) He said, "If the strategy is to underinvest in transit, then the country is meeting that goal". He further stated that we can expect population growth of 70 million people in the coming census, with the majority of those moving into southern and southwest states. That coupled with the growing aging population, increased need for dialysis transportation and the coming dementia tsunami (SWTA's opinion) and the fight between transit or freight, we are losing ground.

CURE: "A strong transit strategy equals a strong freight strategy".

CURE: "Transportation (Transit) is still a bipartisan issue. Educate your delegation regarding game changing investments in surface transportation."

Symptom 4: Waiting for Superman (or woman) to save the day!

CURE: "Be the Superman and THINK - How can we put a system into place, regardless of Congress or the State?"

Finally, Secretary Foxx made the most important point of the day,

"Look at the Surface Transportation System as one unified system that benefits ALL."
