NC Department of Transportation

Strategic Plan

2025 – 2029

September 2025

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A. Introduction

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Strategic Plan reflects our commitment to serving customers, employees, and stakeholders through a unified vision and clear strategic direction. This plan articulates our mission, vision, and values, which are reflected through three meaningful strategic goals and seven accompanying objectives that form the core foundation for the Department's accountability and long-term success.

The Department's goals clearly define our expected outcomes, establishes measurable targets, and chart a clear path forward to provide a safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation network that drives economic growth, improves mobility, and enhances the quality of life for all North Carolinians. The 2025–2029 Strategic Plan also includes a focused commitment to the Division of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV). NCDMV is developing a more detailed strategic plan, and it will be released later this year. This plan will be updated once NCDMV's plan is complete.

Strategic planning is central to how NCDOT sets priorities, communicates expectations, establishes accountability, and measures performance. While the plan does not capture every operational activity across the Department, it identifies critical objectives that drive progress toward our long-term and core values, supporting the Department's mission.

NCDOT employs a phased approach to develop and refine its strategic plan. Our process starts with a detailed review of our mission, vision, values, and existing goals to ensure they are aligned with NC customer demands. Staff in the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Program Support (SIPS) met with units throughout the Department over eighteen months to align unit level goals to the agency's strategic level goals. The next phase defined performance measures and clear outcomes for each strategic goal, paired with actionable strategies to ensure success.

Finally, the plan provides direction to all business units and agencies, ensuring alignment between daily operations, unit goals, and employee performance plans (NCVIP). This integrated approach ensures that every level of the organization contributes to achieving NCDOT's strategic priorities.

The NCDOT Strategic Plan is both a roadmap and a commitment: a framework that directs our work today and positions us to meet the transportation challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. Today, NCDOT has evolved into a multimodal agency committed to supporting the travelers, economy, and overall well-being of North Carolina by providing a comprehensive statewide transportation system that encompasses all forms of travel.

B. Mission, Vision, & Values

1. Mission

Connecting people, products and places safely and efficiently with customer focus, accountability, and environmental sensitivity to enhance the economy and vitality of North Carolina.

2. Vision

To provide a safe and efficient transportation system that works well for everyone.

3. Values

- Safety – We are dedicated to providing a safe transportation network and work environment.
- Quality – We pursue excellence in delivering our projects, programs, services and initiatives.
- Integrity – We earn and maintain trust through accountability, transparency and data-driven decisions.
- Customer Service – We serve our customers in a respectful, professional and timely manner.
- Innovation – We promote the development and use of new and better solutions.
- Teamwork – We work together using our diverse strengths and skills, collaborating to solve problems and serve our communities.

C. Goals, Objectives, & Performance Measures

4. Recover the transportation network after emergencies

	Performance Measures	Notes and Definitions
Objective: Restore transportation infrastructure At the time of this plan's publication, these disaster recovery metrics are specific to Helene recovery. NCDOT will track these and additional metrics for future extreme weather events.	• Helene recovery measures: • Percentage of roads reopened **(96%)**	*NCDOT has reopened over 90% of all roads damaged in Hurricane Helene. Roads may continue to open and close during permanent repair work, so this number will continue to fluctuate.*
	• Percentage of damage sites repaired **(95%)**	*North Carolina sustained over 6,900 damage sites during Hurricane Helene. Temporary repairs have been put in place in many sites, and NCDOT continues to work towards permanent repairs throughout the state.*

5. Provide a safe and efficient transportation system in North Carolina

	Performance Measures	Notes and Definitions
Objective: Improve Safety for all Modes These metrics represent key indicators of our progress on our safety goals. More information about the Department's activities can be found in our Highway Safety Plan.	Number of fatalities on public roadways in NC **(50% reduction by 2035, Vision Zero by 2050)**	*North Carolina is a Vision Zero state; even one fatality or serious injury on our roadways is unacceptable. This metric is defined as the total number of persons suffering fatal injuries in a motor vehicle crash during a calendar year.*
	Rate of fatalities on public roadways in NC **(50% reduction by 2035, Vision Zero by 2050)**	*The fatality rate is calculated as the ratio of total number of fatalities to the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT, in 100 million VMT).*

	Performance Measures	Notes and Definitions
	Number of serious injuries on public roadways in NC **(50% reduction by 2035, Vision Zero by 2050)**	*This metric is defined as the total number of persons suffering at least one serious injury in a motor vehicle crash. USDOT defines serious injuries here.*
	Rate of serious injuries on public roadways in NC **(50% reduction by 2035, Vision Zero by 2050)**	*The serious injury rate is calculated as the ratio of total number of serious injuries to the number of VMT (in 100 million VMT).*
	Number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries on public roadways **(50% reduction by 2035, Vision Zero by 2050)**	*This metric is defined as the combined total number of non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries involving a motor vehicle.*
Objective: Increase Reliability and Access Our mission is to keep people, products, and places connected. These metrics represent a few key reliability and access targets across modes.	National Highway System (NHS) Reliability Index **(80-100%)**	*Percentage of person-miles traveled on the non-Interstate NHS that are reliable. Reliability is defined as the ratio of the 80th percentile travel time of a reporting segment to a "normal" travel time (50th percentile).*
	Interstate travel time index **(1.04-1.15)**	*Interstate Travel Time Index (ITTI) compares the actual travel time to the ideal travel time as defined by the posted speed limits. A value of 1.00 means traffic is moving at the posted speed limit, while a result greater than 1.00 means traffic is slower and a result less than 1.00 means traffic is moving above the posted speed limit, which is feasible in rural and less populated areas.*
	Incident Clearance **(90% in 90 minutes)**	*This metric represents the percent of time a major crash (i.e. one that causes significant or unusual delays)*

	Performance Measures	Notes and Definitions
		is cleared from a North Carolina highway within 90 minutes.
	Ferry reliability **(93-97%)**	*Ferry reliability is defined as the number of scheduled runs missed, not including runs missed due to shoaling and weather, as this is a safety concern.*
	Rail reliability **(70-80%)**	*Passenger train on-time performance is based on Amtrak reporting and accounts for delays due to freight, weather, passenger, mechanical, signal, track and other issues. The Department cannot control freight, weather, and many other delays, and the target for this metric reflects this reality. Agreements between Amtrak and the railroads set national standards for passenger train reliability. Those agreements define "On-time" as passengers arriving within 15 minutes of their scheduled arrival at a station.*
	Percentage of North Carolinians with access to a viable alternative to driving **(target and measurement to be determined)**	*NCDOT is exploring opportunities to reliably and fairly measure access in North Carolina. This plan will be amended with details for measurement once available.*
	Total hours of DMV service available across North Carolina in a typical week **(target to be determined)**	*Sum of total hours when service is available at each DMV Driver License Office location statewide.* *NCDOT aims to expand capacity at DMV and provide access that fits into customers schedules.*
Objective: Increase Customer Satisfaction	**Performance Measures**	***Notes and Definitions***

	Performance Measures	Notes and Definitions
NCDOT administers an annual customer satisfaction survey that scores satisfaction across our modes, divisions, and services. NCDMV is the most common and frequent customer service we provide the public. NCDMV is developing a more detailed strategic plan, and it will be released later this year, so this plan will be updated after NCDMV's plan is complete. NCDMV is analyzing historical data to create appropriate targets for several metrics; additional targets and metrics will be added after the publication of its strategic plan.	Customer satisfaction score **(70-85%)**	*This metric is our annual statewide customer satisfaction score derived from a statewide survey administered by ITRE.*
	DMV customer satisfaction score **(70-85%)**	*DMV is working to make point of service surveys available to all customers after a transaction.*
	DMV Driver License Office wait times **(15-30 minutes)**	*DMV is refreshing methodology for calculating wait time to accurately consider the time between when a customer arrives at a DMV location and when they are served.* *Standard procedures ask examiners to check in customers as soon as possible when they arrive, but time waiting before opening or while waiting on customers ahead to be signed in is not included.*
	DMV Driver License Office average service time **(target TBD)**	*DMV aspires to provide accurate, quality service in a timely fashion to maximize the organization's capacity to meet customer needs.*
	DMV Driver License Office average daily filled terminals **(target TBD)**	*Average daily percentage of terminals for issuing driver licenses staffed throughout the year. This is an indicator of staffing and capacity across the state.*
	DMV % of transactions completed online **(target TBD)**	*Total percentage of driver and vehicle transactions completed without need for an in-person visit.*
	DMV Annual Driver Services Credential Issuances **(target to be defined)**	*Total driver license and ID cards issued to North Carolinians in a year including in-office and online transactions*

6. Improve efficiency and effectiveness of programs, projects, and services

	Performance Measures	Notes and Definitions
Objective: Improve Resource Stewardship NCDOT is committed to being the best possible steward of public resources. To be open and transparent and to comply with Session Law 2019-251of the N.C. General Assembly, the N.C. Department of Transportation will issue a news release each Friday publishing the weekly "NCDOT Cash Watch Numbers" report	End days cash on hand **(90-143 days)**	*Period end available cash divided by average daily expenditures. The ratio measures how many days the Department can cover expenditures using only its current cash balance.*
	Percentage cash to commitments **(26-33%)**	*Period end available cash divided by total commitments. The ratio expresses the Department's ability to cover its obligations with its current cash balance.*
	Total budget overrun for completed projects **(0-5%)**	*Total Construction Expenditures should be within 5% of the budgeted amount for construction. The budgeted amount of construction is 15% over the contract bid amount and considers contract expenditures as well as administrative costs on the project.*
	Percentage of total budget expended on external goods **(75-85%)**	*Expenditures categorized as construction contracts, professional engineering & consultant contracts, right-of-way purchases, grants to other entities, vendor payments, misc. service contracts, equipment purchases, and material purchases divided by total expenditures.*
	Vacancy rate **(15%)**	*With a staff of just over 9,000 employees in both urban and rural areas, NCDOT faces challenges such as employee recruitment and retention, competitive marketplaces for labor, and increasing number of employees eligible for retirement. NCDOT also employs several hard to fill positions, such as DMV*

		examiners and transportation workers.
Objective: Deliver Our Program The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a 10-year State and Federal-mandated plan that identifies the construction funding for and scheduling of transportation projects throughout the state. These metrics relate to the delivery of the STIP.	Delivery rate of projects on the 12-month let list (12MLL) **(75%)**	*NCDOT is exploring opportunities to more accurately measure project delivery across the state. This plan will be amended with details for measurement once available.*
	Percentage of STIP projects let to contract on schedule **(80-90%)**	*Metric is defined as the percentage of STIP and bridge projects with the completed Let milestone as compared to the planned milestone at the start of the fiscal year (baseline). This is based on the number of projects.*
	Percentage of STIP dollars let to contract on schedule **(80-90%)**	*Metric is defined as the percentage of STIP and bridge projects with the completed Let milestone as compared to the planned milestone at the start of the fiscal year (baseline). This is based on the dollar amount of projects.*
	Percentage of construction projects completed on schedule **(80-90%)**	*"On schedule" is defined as being completed within 15 days of the approved contract completion date.*
Objective: Operate and Maintain Our System NCDOT maintains and operates over 80,000 miles of road, over 13,000 bridges, 23 ferries on 8 routes, and over 2,000 buildings. These metrics are a small selection of the work we do to maintain our assets.	Facility condition score **(70-90%)**	*NCDOT owns and maintains more than 2,000 buildings statewide. These buildings include both unoccupied storage facilities in which an acceptable score can begin at 70 percent, and occupied buildings with a target score of 90 percent or better.*
	Pavement health – good condition **(70-80%)**	*North Carolina maintains the second largest road system in the country. In order to maximize limited funding, NCDOT performs road condition surveys to identify roads in greatest need of resurfacing and to help maintain roads throughout their lifecycle. Interstates and*

		Primaries are surveyed on an annual basis and Secondaries are surveyed biennially with half being evaluated each year.
	Bridge condition score – good health **(70-80%)**	*"Good condition" means that the bridge can safely carry the typical-sized commercial or passenger vehicles for that route. For example, an interstate route would have higher weight expectation than a rural secondary road.* *To achieve this goal, the department uses a data-driven strategy to improve the overall condition of all bridges in North Carolina by focusing taxpayer dollars where they're needed most.*
	Percentage of Citizen Action Requests (CARs) addressed on time **(100%)**	*This metric reports total responsiveness to citizen-reported maintenance issues, including potholes, drainage issues, guardrail repairs, damaged or missing signs, malfunctioning traffic lights and shoulder damage, in accordance with G.S. 136-18.05(b)(1).*
	Ferry Division – Ramp condition score **(target TBD)**	*Ramp conditions are assessed biannually.*
	Ferry Division – Percentage of unplanned vessel maintenance cost vs. planned vessel maintenance cost **(target TBD)**	*This metric compares planned and reactive maintenance for the ferry division's vessels.*
	Ferry Division – Vessel condition score **(target TBD)**	*To assess condition, the Ferry Division applies a five-point rating scale to the vessel's age, visual condition, and functional condition. The scores are weighted, and an overall vessel condition score is then assigned to each vessel.*

D. Priority Questions

7. How can NCDOT enhance its disaster response capabilities to better estimate post-disaster impacts and improve its statewide response?

a. Nearly a year after Hurricane Helene, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has made significant progress in rebuilding western North Carolina. As of July 2025, 97% of damaged roads have reopened, and over 460 bridges and over 1,300 large and small culverts have been repaired. A key milestone was reopening Interstate 40, restoring vital access between North Carolina and Tennessee.

   A key question for agency leadership is how to document and institutionalize lessons learned from Hurricane Helene. Extreme weather events will continue, and NCDOT is responsible for recovering the transportation network as efficiently as possible after emergencies.

   NCDOT has already begun facilitating internal peer exchanges to communicate lessons learned and continuous improvement. Disaster response staff have also been updating the Department's disaster playbook and training materials in order to document critical lessons learned from Divisions of Highway, Integrated Mobility, Aviation, and Motor Vehicles.

   NCDOT will also actively engage in peer exchanges with partner agencies and states to analyze past incidents to better understand safety and risk management. Intra-state coordination has been a part of disaster recovery, and the Department aims to help other states not only to recover from events when possible but also to proactively share lessons learned.

8. How is NCDOT measuring the impact of its programs and services to ensure we are meeting its intended goals and objectives?

North Carolina invests over five billion dollars annually in its transportation infrastructure. While the metrics included in this strategic plan are sound indicators of statewide outcomes (travel time, fatalities and serious injuries, ferry and rail reliability, etc.), the Department is expanding its evaluation process from the program level to the project level, and we are incorporating new processes to measure project level performance outcomes.

The Department is examining methods to calculate the return on investment at the project level and will institute a capital STIP pilot program in the coming years. The program will be expanded to maintenance and operations, followed by non-highway functions.

The Department is currently undertaking steps towards this goal. First, staff are improving data quality, accessibility, and are standardizing data to allow uniform analysis. Further, as part of this strategic plan, units are creating goals related to the topline agency outcomes. The Department will closely monitor unit level goals and refine as necessary to ensure impact on statewide goals. NCDOT is also instituting procedural improvements to its state and federal grant award and administration processes.

9. How is NCDOT planning to meet future funding needs and ensure funds are maximized?

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) increased federal highway construction funding by approximately 20 percent, increased federal transit funding for public transit by 30 percent, and established new discretionary and competitive grant programs to support the administration's priority. While IIJA's historic funding provided new resources, North Carolina experienced COVID and post-COVID impacts that increased pre-construction and construction costs for materials, land, and consultant and contracting services. Additionally, North Carolina's population growth and increased vehicle miles traveled put further demands on North Carolina's transportation infrastructure. As a result, one of NCDOT's key priorities is to identify public and private funding and financing opportunities while continuing to implement value engineering and other cost saving mechanisms.

Several tax and fee adjustments have increased NCDOT's state revenues in the last five years. Revenues increased from $4.83B in FY 2022 to $5.77B by FY 2026, an increase of 19% percent. Most prominently, the General Assembly authorized a three-year phase-in of a 6 percent sales tax transfer from FY 2023 to FY 2025. Sales tax revenues are estimated to be $683M in FY 2026. Additionally, DMV fees are adjusted for inflation every four years, last occurring on July 1, 2024. The motor fuels tax is adjusted annually on January 1, and the Transportation Network Fee became effective on July 1, 2025.

NCDOT will continue to identify options for legislative consideration to increase funding and expand alternative financing solutions. This includes updating the Toll Project Development Policy Handbook, studying alternative funding solutions through the Eastern Transportation Coalition/Delaware grant awards for Phase 6 of the Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives Program and Phase One of the Strategic Innovation for Revenue Collection grant program, conducting yearly citizen perception surveys of transportation revenues, and maintaining the AdvanceNCTransportation.com website to inform the public about NCDOT's funding needs and investment options. The Federal Grants Committee will continue to identify eligible projects for competitive grant awards.

10. How can NCDOT deploy new technologies to support the delivery of the Department's goals and help drive efficiency and productivity?

NCDOT is committed to continuous improvement and innovation. We are actively exploring the integration of new technologies across modes and throughout the Department to improve functions. To strengthen governance and coordination, The Office of Strategic Initiatives and Program Support (SIPS) has created a new AI Program Manager position in the Data and Information Branch. This role is focused on aligning and coordinating AI initiatives across NCDOT, the Department of Information Technology Transportation (DITT), and the North Carolina Department of Information Technology (DIT). Collectively, these efforts underscore NCDOT's commitment to leveraging AI and automation as core tools for operational excellence, statewide alignment, and smarter service delivery. A few examples in other units are as follows:

- SIPS also has a staff member dedicated to the Department's work on Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAV), including the following items:
    - Coordinating collaboration, enabling partnerships, facilitating Departmental committees and working groups such as North Carolina's legislatively mandated Fully Autonomous Vehicle (FAV) Committee.
    - Strategic planning and implementation for CAV while serving as a senior advisor on emerging technologies and innovation.
    - Developing an updated strategic plan that reflects on the state's accomplishments and updates the agency's vision, goals, focus

areas, and objectives for CAV towards actions that advance the technology and the state's readiness for the benefit of the public.

- The Integrated Mobility Division (IMD)'s work on automated shuttles, including the following items:
    - The IMD-led Connected Autonomous Shuttle Supporting Innovation program, or CASSI. NCDOT has piloted two models of all-electric, low-speed automated shuttles across five different projects to date.
    - Testing the shuttles at two university campuses, a recreational public lands site, and a municipal park in fixed-route, circulator services on short routes that offered first and last mile connections.
    - Issuing a report to summarize the history and motivations of the CASSI program, findings from completed projects, and overall lessons learned. These findings will guide future pilots under the CASSI program.
- The Division of Aviation's work on UAS (drones) and AAM (Advanced Air Mobility), including the following items:
    - The announcement of the country's first multi-state AAM freight corridor feasibility study between Charlotte and Atlanta.
    - Implementation of a USDOT SMART Grant (RESPOND) to install drone-in-a-box solutions for UAS disaster response and infrastructure inspections.
    - Piloting tethered light drones for worksite / transportation worker safety.
    - Further investigation to determine how (AAM) solutions can be integrated into North Carolina's multimodal transportation system to safely and efficiently move freight and passengers in the future. The Department is working through what infrastructure, regulatory, and operational frameworks are needed to support this integration.
- The Transportation System Management and Operations unit's work on digital infrastructure modernization, including the following items:
    - Initiatives focused on modernizing infrastructure and implementing foundational technologies, such as broadband, to support future technologies like connected and autonomous vehicles.
    - Using various technologies such as dashcams and drones to monitor traffic flow and respond to events in areas without traditional surveillance.

    - Efforts to anticipate and mitigate traffic disruptions, including using hydraulics data to predict impacts on infrastructure, implementing automated alerts for navigation apps and commercial drivers, and piloting emerging technologies for freeway and arterial traffic management.
    - Using different communication methods, such as Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and connected vehicle technology, to keep the public informed during emergencies and special events.
- The Turnpike Authority uses advanced technology throughout its operations, including the following items:
    - In-vehicle tokenized payment initiative with Volvo and Mastercard pilot, positioning us to lead the industry into fully interoperable, vehicle-based tolling and commerce.
    - 5G Cellular Modems used as the primary data source to maintain the roadside integration schedule while fiber is installed and used as a secondary network after fiber installation.
    - Advanced Cameras deployed to count vehicles and improve traffic and revenue studies.
    - Implementation of AI voice recognition software to enhance customer service, including analyzing incoming customer calls and providing scripted prompts to call center agents based on key words used by the customer.
- NCDMV is refreshing its website and improving technology to track operational metrics, including the following items:
    - New paths to direct customers to the most effective channel for the service they need
    - Embedded quizzes to determine whether a customer needs a given service and ensure they have appropriate documentation
    - AI tools for management to explore wait time data to develop office coaching plans

11. How can NCDOT leverage data to make better-informed decisions that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations?

NCDOT seeks to improve data reliability and quality to make it easier to make data-driven decisions. Agency leadership is committed to improving data governance in the Department.

In the summer of 2024, the agency created a new unit called the Data & Information Branch in the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Program Support (SIPS). This unit is responsible for the following actions that support units across the Department, including DOH, Multi-Modal and shared services:

- Data driven problem/gap identification
- Robust modeling, forecasting, and scenario planning
- Clear strategy waterfall from vision to tactical and operational goals that everyone supports
- Structure of transparency and accountability to know how NCDOT is performing in all areas
- Plan governance to ensure open dialogue and frequent calibration as new information becomes available

12. What strategies can NCDOT implement to improve internal operational efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring optimal use of resources and timely completion of projects?

To be the best steward of state resources, NCDOT is exploring all opportunities to modernize the agency and make units more efficient and effective. NCDOT is semi-decentralized, with 14 highway divisions across the state delivering local projects. Central units, such as HR, IT, Technical Services, Finance, Planning and Programming, Ferry, Rail, Aviation, Integrated Mobility, and Communications provide support and expertise to the department's various divisions and projects.

To better and more easily support thousands of staff across the state, agency leadership has identified the following potential steps to implement over the coming years:

- Expand repository of Standard Operating Procedures and Job Aids, including centralizing existing resources and providing support for units to develop new documents
- Develop an AI strategic plan and steering committee, including exploring AI use cases, such as Microsoft Co-Pilot
- Improve central unit performance to streamline working across and throughout the Department, including newly developed unit level goals