



CASE STUDY



RIDE Wilson, NC

Paving the way for economic mobility in a rural community.

PARTNER

City of Wilson

LOCATION

Wilson, NC

LAUNCH

September 2020

USE CASE

Provide a comprehensive public transit service for commuting, health care, and general purpose trips

GOAL

Expand transit coverage and improve service efficiency by replacing an outdated fixed route system with on-demand



Overview

Though small in population, Wilson, North Carolina, is big on innovation. In July 2020, Wilson partnered with Via to implement a comprehensive overhaul of its public transit system. Introduced in the 1960s, Wilson's bus system was designed for commuters working in the City's downtown. But as the City's economic development and commuting patterns became more dispersed, its bus network failed to serve those commuting to jobs away from the city center.

0%

INCREASE IN
BUDGET

60%

INCREASE IN SERVICE COVERAGE

“For years we have been looking for a technology-based solution that would increase our levels of service to our citizens while containing costs. We believe this public/private partnership provides such an opportunity.”

– Grant Goings, Wilson City Manager (article)

“[RIDE] has changed people’s lives. And that’s what makes me thrilled to be able to offer this service in a community like Wilson.”

– Rodger Lentz, Chief Planning and Development Officer

Solution

In September 2020, Via replaced Wilson’s fixed route network with an entirely on-demand transit system, called RIDE. RIDE covers all of Wilson with a fleet of 10 on-demand vans – providing corner-to-corner service for residents traveling anywhere in the City. With wheelchair-accessible vehicles, phone booking for customers without smartphones, and payment options for those who are unbanked, RIDE ensures accessibility for all Wilson residents. Customers pay a flat \$1.50 fare for trips anywhere within the City, and RIDE offers free or discounted trips for seniors and riders with disabilities.



SERVICE ZONE

31 SQUARE MILES



FLEET SIZE

10 VEHICLES



HOURS OF SERVICE

7AM-6PM MONDAY TO THURSDAY



RIDER COHORTS

SENIORS, LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS, RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES, NEW TRANSIT USERS

Results

Since launch, RIDE has significantly improved mobility for residents of Wilson. 75% of customers book trips using the Via Rider App, and the service has an average rider rating of 4.9 out of 5 stars. With RIDE, transit coverage has jumped from roughly 40% of the city to 100%, without increasing budget. Further, Via has partnered with Wilson to execute targeted marketing and community engagement campaigns, driving significant growth in ridership. Pre-COVID, Wilson’s fixed route system saw 275 daily riders and, after the onset of the pandemic, fixed route ridership sat at 55 rides per day. Now, only months after launch, RIDE averages over 300 rides per day. Via worked closely with Wilson to win a competitive grant from the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Accelerating Innovative Mobility program that will allow the City to offer service during additional hours. Long viewed as a major contributor to unemployment in Wilson, public transportation now enables economic development. By providing reliable and accessible transportation to job sites, health care, and local businesses, Wilson is paving the way for rural communities to utilize microtransit for long-term economic growth.