



Mooreville

Comprehensive Transportation Plan

Chapter 1 – History

Over the years, Mooreville has changed. From a small train stop on the route north out of Charlotte, to today's burgeoning community complete with businesses and recreational opportunities ranging from the arts to stockcar racing, Mooreville continues to evolve to meet the needs of its citizens.

Town Origins

European settlers who came to the area built their cabins and farms near the Catawba River, named for the Catawba Indians. In 1856, the Atlantic, Tennessee and Ohio Railroad Company had 44 miles of railroad stretching from Charlotte to Statesville. The company wanted to create a train depot and sidetracks. Railroad officials requested land for the project, and property was donated by John Franklin Moore. The railroad influenced the growth of businesses and development in the area, and in 1873 the town was renamed Mooreville, in honor of the man who donated land to the community's foundation.

Much has changed in the 150 years that followed the railroad's request. From the first acres given to build the railroad side track, Mooreville has grown to encompass more than 1,500 paved highway miles including the original Main and Broad Streets. In 2000, the U.S. Census estimated that Mooreville was the 38th largest city (by population) in North Carolina with a population of more than 18,823.



Source: Town of Mooreville Website

Business and Industry

Downtown Businesses

Main Street once served as the heart of business in Mooreville. The original train depot was constructed at the corner of Main Street and Center Avenue. Eventually this depot was replaced in the 1920's by a



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Southern Railroad passenger station, which has recently been converted to the Depot Visual Arts Center.

The railroad tracks run through the middle of the town parallel to Main and Broad Streets. Accounts in the 1930's suggest that the people of Mooresville moved north and south in the community with ease but had trouble moving east to west even when no trains were running.



Source: Town of Mooresville Website

Despite any complications presented by trains, businesses once thrived downtown, including Rayless department store, Belk's department store, and Rose's 5 and 10 Cent Store. During their peak business years, these stores offered a variety of goods for sale and were popular shopping destinations.

Another historic business was housed in the building constructed on the corner of Main Street and Center Avenue. Goodman's drug company featured noteworthy floors and a soda fountain shop. Residents along Main Street residents could also find quality furniture and household items in Blackwelder's furniture store. The store gave credit and helped many in town upgrade to modern furniture and appliances.

While time has seen some businesses close their doors, D.E. Turner and Company has offered merchandise downtown for 101 years. This hardware store specializes in items that cannot be found in big-box discount stores, such as Radio Flyer wagons and tin ice cream freezers. Another long-time Mooresville business is the Mooresville Ice Cream Company, which has remained in the same location on Broad Street since the 1940's.

As the area developed and transportation infrastructure grew, much of the once successful downtown fell victim to the community's success as a port city for Lake Norman. Many businesses relocated to shopping centers and strip malls along NC Highway 150 closer to Interstate I-77.



Lake Norman

The past and present impacts Lake Norman has had on Mooresville cannot be ignored. At the turn of the 20th Century, James "Buck" Duke, president of the American Tobacco Company, and his brother, Ben, saw the potential for a textile industry in the Carolinas with the help of hydroelectric power. The Southern Power Company was formed and would be renamed the Duke Power Company in 1927.

Through this initiative to create hydroelectric power, the Catawba River Valley would be transformed. In 1963, Cowan's Ford Dam was completed, forming a 32,500 acre reservoir to provide water as well as power to the local area.

Named for Duke Power President Norman Cocks, Lake Norman is 34 miles long at its widest point, 8 miles wide, and 130 feet deep. Its size makes it the largest lake in North Carolina. Citizens of Mooresville rely on Lake Norman for their water supply, as do residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Lincoln County, Davidson, and Huntersville. Three generating plants are located on Lake Norman today — Cowan's Ford Hydroelectric Station, Marshall Steam Station, and McGuire Nuclear Station. In addition to the water and power supply, Duke Power also provides 1,300 acres for the Duke Power State Park and 10 public access areas around the lake.

Mooresville Cotton Mill

The area around Mooresville has been influenced by industry as well as business. The largest industry in Mooresville was started in 1893 by James Sherrill and a small group of investors. The Mooresville Cotton Mill was featured in *The State Magazine* in March 1937 in the article "Mooresville, A Thriving City in Iredell County." The cotton mill provided manufacturing jobs and produced towels, drapery and upholstery fabric, flannels, curtain goods, dress goods, and men's suiting materials. While small villages appeared around the mill, those who did not live nearby were bused to



Source: Town of Mooresville Website



work. Childcare for working mothers and the community house facilities were provided to mill employees, and a large gymnasium and nine-hole golf course were built for mill employees in the 1940's.

Race City USA

In recent years, Mooresville has transformed itself from a southern farming and textile community to one of the premiere locations supporting National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR). During the 1990's, many of the premiere racing teams moved to Mooresville. Today, Mooresville is home to the North Carolina Auto Racing Hall of Fame and more than 60 auto racing teams. The presence of these teams has boosted the tourism industry in Mooresville, attracting almost 180,000 people every year. During the week between the All-Star Race and Coca-Cola 600 race, approximately 30,000 visitors travel from nearby Lowe's Motor Speedway to Mooresville.

In addition to attracting tourists to the area, the racing industry also accounts for more than 1,500 jobs. This kind of job market diversification is one factor in the explosion in Mooresville's population — 70% growth in population between 1990 and 1998.

Development and Transportation

Development Patterns

Reviewing the Town's growth clearly shows how the once compact town evolved to include a sprawling development with construction of Lake Norman and Interstate I-77. Initially, areas surrounding the central business district were developed with a primarily rectilinear grid of streets. The next band of developments looked less like a grid and is more easily identified today by curvilinear streets and commercial centers. Adjacent to Lake Norman the grid is isolated and follows the geography of the peninsulas.

By the late 1950's the focus of new residential development began to shift to areas outside the town center. Although the central business district remained a hub of activity, businesses would soon begin to relocate to the rapidly developing suburban business parks and shopping centers. These centers were developed beginning in the late 1960's and created competition for the once thriving downtown.



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The early 1990's marked the beginning of a renaissance in the redevelopment of downtown Mooresville. In recent years, Mooresville has focused on revitalizing its downtown through streetscape projects and facades restoration. Phase I Downtown Improvements were recently completed and Phase II improvements are currently under design. Since the redevelopment, businesses have begun to prosper. Though attracting downtown development remains a challenge, the town continues to strive towards the goal of a healthy downtown through investment in the public realm.

Travel in Modern Mooresville

In the past 150 years, travel modes and patterns have changed dramatically in Mooresville. The 1800's through the early 1900's were dominated by horse, mule-drawn, and foot travel. Those who were fortunate could travel long distances by passenger train, with the presence of Atlantic, Tennessee and Ohio Railroad Company.

The 20th century brought the automobile, a travel revolution, and an entirely new set of challenges. First mass-produced and made affordable to the American public by Henry Ford, the automobile entered Mooresville in earnest in the early 1900's. In the mid-1940's, Kemit Smith's taxi stand was located downtown and provided transportation; it closed, however, after many townspeople found they could afford to own their own automobiles. With a private automobile, it became easier to cover longer distances in short periods of time. This offered people the opportunity not only to cover greater distances for leisure, but also to live greater distances from work, thereby fueling the expansion of Mooresville.



Source: Town of Mooresville Website

The area's highway infrastructure continues to evolve as a way of addressing the needs of changing traffic and development patterns.



Major highways in the area include:

- Interstate I-77
- US Highway 21
- NC Highway 115
- NC Highway 150
- NC Highway 152
- NC Highway 3
- NC Highway 801

Each of these highways carries a high percentage of through traffic – traffic with neither an origin nor destination within the Mooresville area. The area includes several major thoroughfares such as Brawley School Road, Mazeppa and Shearers Road which carry a higher proportion of locally oriented traffic as well as some through traffic.

Similar to the influence of the railroads in the 1850's, the proliferation of commercial air transportation in the 1950's and 1960's revolutionized long-distance travel. Air travel is an increasingly accessible form of travel. The Charlotte Douglas International Airport is located approximately 30 miles from Mooresville and the Statesville airport is located 20 miles to the north.

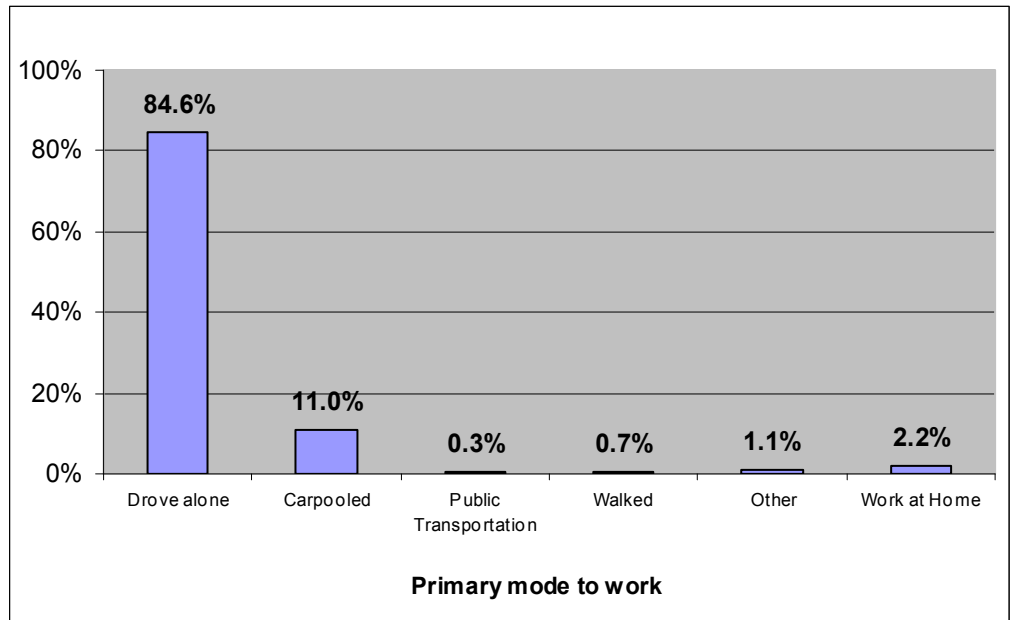
Mooresville's Commute

As part of the U.S. Census 2000, "commuting to work" information was collected. The data was collected to study travel characteristics of the American population. For Mooresville (shown in **Figure 1.1**), statistics indicated that the most popular mode of transportation to and from work was the privately owned vehicle, driven alone (85%). Of the survey respondents, 11% rideshared or carpooled to work, while only 0.3% of respondents reported using public transportation and 0.7% reported walking to work. Only 1% of the survey respondents reported using other means of transportation to travel to work and 2% of respondents said that they worked from home.

Information compiled in 2000 by the North Carolina State Data Center (NCSDC) indicated that the 41,787 workers do not leave Iredell County when they commute to work. The information shows that 18,404 Iredell County worker's commute to jobs that are located outside Iredell County; however, 13,182 worker's commute from their residence in another county to a job in Iredell County.



Figure 1.1 – Mooresville Journey to Work



Source: US Census 2000

