

Across Boundaries . . .

*Collaboration among
Catawba County
and its municipalities,
Brookford, Catawba, Claremont,
Conover, Hickory, Long View,
Maiden and Newton, and the
Unifour counties and municipalities
and beyond*

SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND NON-PROFITS

Local Government Meetings

There are (a) monthly meetings of managers and assistants in the four-county region, (b) monthly meetings of Catawba County managers and assistants, (c) quarterly meetings of mayors and managers in the region, (d) monthly meetings of board of commission chairs and managers in the region, (e) quarterly meetings of local government information technology staff; and (f) bimonthly meetings of County Attorney and Hickory City Attorney.

Construction Manager

Catawba County funds two construction managers in cooperation with the three public school systems and the community college. In addition to overseeing all design, bidding and construction of school and community college buildings and renovations, the construction managers also oversee projects for Catawba County, such as jail expansion, Social Services, and Public Health facilities.

Lobbying Efforts

Catawba County and the City of Hickory have partnered for lobbying services in the past and have just retained a new lobbyist in Raleigh to further the state legislative interests of the County and City. Legislative agendas and costs are shared.

Catawba County Schools

Catawba County partners with Catawba County Schools for printing services and office supplies. Catawba County Schools has a print shop and a large warehouse of office supplies/copy paper. County departments send large print jobs to the school print shop and orders copy paper and some office supplies from the school warehouse.

Mental Health Partners

Mental Health Partners receives contracted support for human resources, finance/payroll, and technology support for hardware and software components of Mental Health Partners. This includes network, server, desktop hardware and applications, and help desk services.

Area Agency on Aging

Planning for and delivery of services to the elderly throughout four counties.

Sister Cities

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments coordinates a regional partnership between several local cities and counties and a region in Germany. The group plans to seek additional partnerships.

Catawba County Communicators Group

Communication and public relations professionals from Catawba County, its Emergency Services, Sheriff, Social Services and Public Health agencies, cities including Hickory and Newton, the three public school systems and Catawba Valley Community College have formed an unofficial but well organized committee of government communicators. This group meets quarterly to stay in touch on the latest trends in communication and local media, be supportive of each other and try to improve the overall level of communication between the public and the private sectors. The committee's most significant contribution has been in the area of emergency preparedness. It has organized communication systems across agencies that would be used in times of disaster, and has organized drill and other training opportunities for the whole group.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Corporation

The Catawba County Economic Development Corporation is funded approximately 52% by Catawba County and 48% by the cities of Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Hickory, Maiden, and Newton.

Future Forward

A twelve-county economic effort that has resulted in development of a "Futures for Kids" program in area schools, potential development of a four-year engineering program, development of certified industrial sites, investigation of brownfield sites, market research, etc.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

Planning for and delivery of workforce development programs throughout four counties.

Region E Development Corporation

Provides assistance to businesses and helps them secure loans through banks and the SBA program.

Greater Hickory Metro Marketing

Alexander, Burke, Catawba, Caldwell and Iredell counties and the cities within have coordinated efforts for tourism and economic development. The Western

Piedmont Council of Governments facilitates to plan, coordinate and implement activities beneficial to all participants. Examples include the marketing and relationship building at the Greater Hickory Golf Classic, the development of the regional visitor guide and a regional website by the tourism groups, and the efforts to recruit and support statewide events such as the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) and North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) conferences.

ENVIRONMENT

ECOCOMPLEX

The EcoComplex consist of partnerships between Catawba County government, North Carolina Universities (currently ASU, UNCC, NCSU, and NC-A&T), green businesses and NGOs to promote, implement, and incubate green energy and sustainable technologies and businesses by employing industrial ecology and utilizing the County's Regional EcoComplex. The EcoComplex predominant goals are to reduce the county's landfill operating costs, waste volume, waste processing, convert waste into productive resources such as electrical and heat energies, and to optimize the county's EcoComplex/landfill properties accordingly.

Catawba River Study Committee

The Catawba River Study Committee discusses and proposes actions on issues including water quality and quantity for surface waters within the upper Catawba River. The committee is staffed by a water quality administrator whose position has been supported for over 12 years by 28 local governments within the four-county region. Responsibilities include developing watershed management plans; assisting local governments with meeting Phase II stormwater regulations; providing technical assistance on the recent FERC relicensing process for the Duke Power dams along the Catawba River; assisting local governments with shoreline protection, developing grants for water quality initiatives, and administering a regional septic tank repair program.

Catawba Coalition

The Protect the Catawba Coalition is composed of 21 financially contributing municipal entities in North and South Carolina who have an interest in the management and allocation of water resources in the Carolinas, including the transfer of water from one basin to another. The Coalition plays an active role in opposing the Concord-Kannapolis interbasin transfer of water (IBT), including lobbying efforts that resulted in the General Assembly's adoption of Session Laws 2007-518 and 2007-484, which made the IBT process more transparent and open,

and imposed a more stringent and equitable statewide approach to allocating water rights.

Keep Catawba County Beautiful

Keep Catawba County Beautiful (KCCB) is a partnership between County government, local businesses, and individuals with the purpose of promoting litter prevention, education and community beautification. The cities of Conover, Hickory and Newton have a representative on the KCCB board. KCCB is an affiliate of the national organization, Keep America Beautiful. KCCB was born from the Catawba County Litter Task Force, which was implemented to combat the problem of community litter.

Air Quality

Committee meets regularly to discuss and propose action on various air quality issues.

HOUSING

Section 8

A four-county (Alexander, Burke, Catawba and Caldwell) Section 8 Housing Program provides rental assistance to low-income tenants.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Home Program

\$1.3 million allocated annually to four counties and 24 municipalities. 1,309 homes have been purchased using down payment assistance.

LIBRARIES

Branches

Catawba County, in cooperation with Conover, Maiden and Claremont, operates branch libraries in those cities. In addition, Hickory operates Patrick Beaver Memorial Library and the County financially contributes to it annually.

NCLIVE (North Carolina Libraries for Virtual Education)

NCLIVE provides North Carolina residents with access to complete articles from searchable collections of over 16,000 magazines and newspapers, 25,000 electronic books, historical materials and map, and indexing for 25,000 periodical titles. Visit NCLIVE.org, select Catawba County, enter the password “deepvine” and submit. NCLIVE is available free of charge to library users, students and educators from public libraries, community colleges, the state’s university system and members of the NC Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

The Big Read

Catawba County, the City of Hickory, Catawba County Community College, and Lenoir Rhyne College are working to present book discussions, programs, and other reading events to all interested citizens and students. The joint project is known as The Big Read. A grant from the North Carolina Council of the Arts has partially funded the countywide reading initiative. Students and citizens from Catawba County will participate. This year the selected book is Julia Alvarez's novel "How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent."

PLANNING

Parks Master Plan

Catawba County has developed a "Comprehensive Parks Master Plan" which identifies goals and strategies for future recreation planning priorities,. The Plan earmarks opportunity sites for future expansion and identifies funding sources and strategies that could be utilized in growing the parks system throughout the unincorporated areas of the county. The Plan works in concert with existing and planned park systems associated with the towns and municipalities throughout the county and the Unifour, as well as other recreation providers in the county, i.e., YMCA, Optimist, and Historical Association.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

In conformance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, Catawba County Planning staff led the process of developing a countywide hazard mitigation plan in 2004 which addresses the mitigation of natural hazards that can occur in the county. These strategies were then presented and adopted by Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Hickory, Long View, Maiden and Newton. The County Planning staff reconvened local government representatives to evaluate the status of their adopted mitigation strategies and to begin preparation for a 5-year plan update beginning in late 2008.

Unifour Open Space Task Force

The WPCOG led the process of developing a regional map which displays all recreation facilities in the four-county area. Upon completion of the map, local governments contributed to and participated in the development of a "Greater Hickory Recreation/Tourism Plan." The purpose of the plan was to develop a strategy, built upon community consensus, for repositioning the region's economy by leveraging the natural, cultural and recreational resources for sustainable economic growth and prosperity. The plan identifies recreation opportunities in

the Unifour and provides strategies for developing linkages to existing facilities and the creation of new facilities on a regional basis.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Adolescent Health Partnership

The Totally Teens Health Center (TTHC) is a public/private partnership with Catawba Pediatrics Associates (CPA) to operate the only school-based/school-linked health center in Catawba County serving adolescents ages 13-21 in a teen-friendly environment. CPA provides Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, medical back-up for nights, weekends, and holidays, and medical supervision to assist Public Health staff in coordinating health care of adolescents. Totally Teens Health Center also partners with Family N.E.T. to provide mental health counseling to adolescents in need of services.

Air Quality

The Unifour Air Quality Committee (UAQC) is a partnership of all the counties and municipalities in the Unifour area. The Committee meets regularly to keep abreast of air quality issues, specifically Particulate Matter 2.5 and ozone and what impacts these issues have on the economy and health of our region. The Committee discusses and proposes actions on these various air quality issues.

Catawba County Health Partners

Catawba County Health Partners, a certified Healthy Carolinians Coalition, is a broad-based community group formed to improve the health and well-being of Catawba County residents by identifying and addressing health priorities and disparities through public awareness and education, community involvement, maximizing resources, and influencing public policy. Currently, the four priority focus areas are Access to Healthcare, Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention for teens, Eat Smart Move More (Childhood Obesity Prevention) and Cancer.

Catawba County Local Information Team (LIT)

Communication and public relations professionals from Catawba County, its Emergency Services, Sheriff, Social Services and Public Health agencies, cities including Hickory and Newton, the three public school systems, CVCC, Lenoir-Rhyne University, CVMC, Frye Hospital, Hospice, American Red Cross, and large corporations have formed a committee of communicators. This group is required by the Public Health Regional Response Team to assist in crisis communication and is known as a Local Information Team or LIT. After an extended hiatus, the LIT is starting to meet on a regular basis to discuss communication mediums, communication resources provided at a regional and state level, and ways to

improve communications across agencies and in the general public. The group shares communications tools and ideas. The LIT also disseminates information through its list of contacts. The LIT has conducted drills to test its communication process and identify gaps in its system and are is working to create a correction action plan. It is working to develop communication procedures and expectations during disasters, including pandemics.

Greater Hickory Cooperative Christian Ministries (GHCCM)

Catawba County Public Health (CCPH) maintains a strong partnership with GHCCM. Beyond working together to address the uninsured population through the Medical Access of Catawba County, CCPH has financially supported their health and dental clinics. CCPH contributes \$20,000/year to these efforts - \$10,000 for prescription drugs and \$10,000 for adult dental care.

Prenatal Program:

Catawba County Public Health Prenatal Program provides comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care thanks to partnerships with Catawba Valley Medical Center that provide the clinicians for our patients and around the clock provider care at the hospital. The prenatal program also partners with the Pregnancy Care Center and Centro Latino to ensure that women presenting to their agencies have a resource for prenatal care.

School Health

Catawba County Public Health partners with Catawba Valley Medical Center and all three school systems in Catawba County to provide 25 school nurses to serve over 24,000 students. This partnership has brought the school nurse to student ratio to approximately 1:950, closer to the CDC's recommendation of 1:750. The decreased nurse to student ratio has positively impacted health outcomes for school children including more access to health screenings and follow up care, case management for chronic medical conditions, and increased access to medical and dental homes.

Women's Preventive Health (WPH)/Breast and Cervical Cancer Programs (BCCCP):

The WPH and BCCCP programs provide preventive exams for women of childbearing years and women from 40-64 beyond child bearing years. Women 40 years and older are also scheduled for a screening mammogram through a partnership with CVMC that provides the mammograms on the mobile unit at no cost. Public Health works in partnership with Burke County Public Health to provide BCCCP services to their county residents as well as Catawba County.

For women with gynecological problems, there is a partnership with the Center for Women's Specialties through Catawba Valley Medical Center. For women with breast problems, there are partnerships with the Catawba County Breast Cancer Coalition, American Cancer Society, the NC Foothills Komen Foundation and local surgeon practices to insure adequate follow up for these problems. WPH/BCCCP also partners with Cooperative Christian Ministries of Greater Hickory to insure that women who have chronic medical issues such as diabetes, COPD, and hypertension can be linked with a primary physician to meet their medical needs.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Burke-Catawba District Confinement Facility

Burke and Catawba counties jointly own a 188-bed confinement facility located in Morganton, in addition to their own jail space.

Medical First Responder Program

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners, in a 2000 Emergency Services Strategic Plan, adopted a 6-minute response time criteria for medical first response. Medical first response is provided throughout the county by all rescue squads and multiple fire departments to include Hickory Fire Department. Last fiscal year, there were 10,433 medical first response calls countywide, with an average yearly response time of 5:25. Hickory Fire Department responded to 3,327 medical first response calls and had a yearly average of 4:38.

Urban Search and Rescue Team

Working with response agencies, the County developed a team for technical rescue operations. The team consists of fire, rescue, EMS and law enforcement personnel. The team currently includes members from all rescue squads and Hickory Fire Department, Newton Fire Department and Sherrills Ford-Terrell Fire and Rescue. The team trains as a group and is equipped to respond to events involving structural collapse, trench, confined space, swift water and high angle rescue as well as search operations.

Special Tactics and Response (S.T.A.R.) Team

Catawba County, along with the jurisdictions of Maiden, Newton, Conover, and Long View, formed the Catawba County Special Tactics and Response Team (S.T.A.R. Team) in 1997 to handle barricaded and hostage situations, dangerous narcotics and murder warrant services, along with woodland and building searches of armed suspects throughout the county.

Hazardous Materials Response Team

The Catawba County Fire/Rescue Division in conjunction with Catawba County EMS coordinates the Technician Level Hazardous Materials Response Team. This team is composed of fire/rescue division personnel, EMS personnel and members from Newton Fire Department and Sherrills Ford-Terrell Fire and Rescue. All team members are certified through the State to the Technician level and are trained to respond to and mitigate hazardous materials incidents.

Fire Safety Inspections

The Catawba County Fire/Rescue Division contracts with Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Long View and Maiden to conduct fire inspections as required by State law.

Community Alert System

Catawba County and the municipalities of: Hickory, Newton, Conover, Claremont and Catawba partner to provide an alert system called CodeRed to notify the citizens and businesses by telephone with important information in a large-scale emergency. The system may also be used to notify the public of important and urgent situations related to public safety such as utility interruptions, road closures, hostage situations and public health emergencies. The Community Alert System is intended to supplement, not replace, information citizens receive from local officials through the media. Messages include information and instructions about where to go, what to do, and contact numbers for further assistance. Messages can also be sent as e-mail or SMS text if those sources are registered by the citizen.

Animal Control Services

Catawba County operates an animal shelter which is also used by Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Hickory, Long View, Maiden and Newton. Catawba County also provides Animal Control Officers for Conover and Claremont, which contract for these services.

Blue Ridge Law Enforcement Association

Periodic meetings of area law enforcement agencies to discuss training and other issues.

Catawba Valley Drug Task Force

A multi-jurisdiction team to dismantle major drug trafficking organizations operating in Catawba County, or those drug organizations that do business in Catawba County. Drug Task Force operations afford the opportunity for Hickory,

Newton, Long View, and the FBI to participate in a joint effort to reduce drug activity. Efforts may reach nationwide if a nexus to Catawba County is present.

TAX

Tax Billing and Collection

Catawba County contracts with Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Hickory, Long View, Maiden and Newton to provide municipality billing and collection for ad valorem property taxes and motor vehicle taxes, both current and delinquent.

TECHNOLOGY

GIS

Catawba County and the cities of Claremont, Conover, Hickory, Long View, Maiden and Newton have worked together on GIS since 1989. The municipalities have direct access to data and information stored on the County's server. The GIS Steering Committee, made up of representatives from each municipality, meets every other month to discuss new projects and work together on joint issues. Funding is shared for items such as fly-over projects, server maintenance, and some personnel costs. In addition, Catawba County is working with the counties of Burke, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg, in a regional orthophoto project coordinated and administered by Centralina COG in Charlotte.

WAN – Fiber Network/Shared Internet Bandwidth

As part of a 1995 Cable Franchise agreement with Charter Communications, four additional strands of fiber were installed to participating government agency buildings. Over thirty buildings are on the network. Many other benefits have been realized from the network such as the ability to share information, Internet access, VoIP and reduced phone charges. Catawba County, Newton, Conover, Maiden, Hickory, Claremont, Long View, Catawba Valley Medical Center, Newton-Conover Schools, and the Western Piedmont Council of Government participated in this project.

In 2007, this partnership used the existing WAN to upgrade Internet service from 4 Mb to 50Mb. This service is shared by the County and the municipalities in the county served by the WPCOG.

Technology Software Training

Catawba County offers free computer training classes to other cities and nonprofit agencies. Recently, the City of Newton, US Dept of Agriculture, Catawba Valley Behavioral Healthcare, and Adult Life Programs have taken advantage of this opportunity.

Hosting Websites

Catawba County provides assistance in design, maintenance and hosting of web sites for municipalities and county related nonprofits in the area.

Communications Center

The Catawba County E-911 Communications Center provides emergency and administrative communications for the citizens of Catawba County by placing them in touch with public safety and related government service agencies. The E-911 Center provides 911 public safety dispatch services for the County of Catawba, and the municipalities of Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Hickory, Long View, Maiden, and Newton. After the hours of 5pm, the Communications Center handles all calls for the County offices, Sheriff's Office, (Detectives, Civil, Warrants, Lake Patrol, Narcotics, Star Team (Negotiators), SOS (Sheriff's Office Search Team,)), Social Services, Public Health, Mental Health, Animal Control, Alcohol Abuse, County Maintenance, Emergency Management, First Step (Spouse Abuse), N.C. Forestry Service, Juvenile Probation, Adult Probation, Land Field, Magistrates, Rape Crisis, Utilities, USAR, Project Lifesaver, Department of Transportation (bridge maintenance, road maintenance, traffic lights), N.C. Wildlife Division, and county and state Alcohol Law Enforcement.)

The Communications Center relies on the most current state-of-the-art computerization, along with radio and telephone technology to assure that the saving of lives and property can be attained. The center has redundancy built into all of the systems, which includes back-up to all systems and backup generator power.

The Communications Center works closely with the Hickory Police Department Communication Center. The Hickory PD Center functions as the primary backup for the E-911 center. The Communication Center also works closely with other communication centers in the region to ensure that a regional system has the interoperability needed to deal with a widespread emergency. The Communications Center is installing technology that would allow for regional backup centers in the future.

800 MHz VIPER System and Communications Towers

The Communication Center also is working with the NC State Highway Patrol to use their 800 MHz VIPER system. The County has been granted 16 dedicated talk groups on the system and has the capability to communicate with any other agency on the statewide system. As part of this partnership, Catawba County has worked with the NCSHP to construct a tower on Riverbend road and is currently working with them to upgrade a tower on Bakers Mountain.

Public Safety Mobile/AVL project

Catawba County recently completed a project with the City of Conover Police/Fire, City of Hickory Fire, EMS and the Sheriff's Office to provide AVL and mobile access to data stores located on Catawba County and NC State servers. This new technology will help the public safety divisions in a couple of ways.

First, the VisionAir Mobile system allows access to vital dispatch information from the officer's laptops. This lets the public safety officers and telecommunicators be more efficient by providing the information real time to their computers.

Second, the GPS tracking system will track the location of public safety vehicles. This provides a safety net for our public safety personnel. Also, the GPS tracking system will guide public safety vehicles to the designated locations, thus reducing the amount of time it takes to arrive at the destination.

Third, the Mobile Field Applications is the critical software that will allow the various departments to perform more productively. This will empower the county in several ways: office space will not be required because users can complete all work from the field, collection and delivery of data immediately helps provide better customer satisfaction and keeping the employees in the field allows them to serve more customers.

County-Wide Permitting Services (in progress)

Catawba County is working with several municipalities to provide consolidated permitting services for citizens. During October, 2009, Catawba County and the City of Hickory moved to a shared system for planning, environmental health, building, and fire permits. This will be expanded to include the municipalities of Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Long View, Maiden and Newton during 2010.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Municipalities:

- Town of Maiden: Senior Nutrition site support
- Town of Longview: Longstanding support of Project HEART in Hilltop Apts and Advisory Board
- City of Newton: Southside Park usage for adoption and foster care events
- City of Conover: Support of Child Advocacy Center events, use of equipment and support staff
- Buncombe and Mecklenburg counties: Creation, enhancement, and joint collaboration ongoing for main Social Services case management system (ISSI)
- All Unifour counties (and sometimes beyond): Perform Adult and Child protective Services (APS & CPS) investigations/reporting when there is an internal conflict of interest

Public Schools:

A. Hickory Public Schools:

- Space for DHR Social Work staff at elementary schools
- Centro Latino—at old Grandview building for ARRA
- Catawba Valley High School—for Robin Dycus, social worker and SAIOP Program (Substance-involved Adolescent Intensive Outpatient Program)
- Multiple location space for Mental Health Therapists

B. Newton Conover Schools:

- ACT program located in Newton Admin building complex
- Offices for ARRA staff at Thornton and South Newton

C. Catawba County Schools

- Space for day treatment program at CREC
- Sweetwater Early Childhood Center and the Early Childhood Support Team (ECST)
- Office Space for ARRA staff at four elementary schools

Law Enforcement:

- Newton Police Dept—CPS social worker co-located with Law Enforcement
- Hickory City: CPS social worker co-located with Hickory Law Enforcement

- Catawba County Sheriff:
 - Sex-abuse investigators
 - Child Support enforcement

Catawba Valley Medical Center:

- Co-location of Eligibility Staff (Medicaid)
- Maintain security contract for Public Health, Social Services and CVBH

Cooperative Christian Ministries/Salvation Army:

- Program eligibility support
- Shared funding resources
- Shared Information Technology

Area Churches:

- Space for Senior Nutrition sites provided by Highland United Methodist Church, First Presbyterian Church in Newton and Catawba United Methodist
- Group activities for Family Builders, Therapeutic Foster Care, Nurturing Program, Post-Adoption support groups, Family NET staff retreats, agency training, etc...

Greenway Transit Authority:

- Nutrition site transportation
- Medicaid transportation

Other Governmental Entities:

- Nutrition site located at West Hickory Senior Center which is operated by the Catawba County Council on Aging; building is owned by the City of Hickory.
- Food Assistance and Employment Security Commission/CVCC to secure Jobs and Job training for recipients
- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency prevention collaborations around residential, Intensive in Home, and Substance abuse needs
- Appalachian State University/ AFI support of group home programs
- Multi level work with area Local Management Entity surrounding community mental health needs
- Early Childhood Support Team (ECST) and the public School systems, Smart Start, More at Four, Parenting Network, Children's Resource Center, etc...

Other Not for Profit Entities:

- Work First and Goodwill collaborative to assess the employability of WF recipients who have significant barriers to employment
- Public-private partnership with the Children’s Advocacy Center, which provides on-site interviews and medical exams for children with alleged severe physical and sexual abuse. Provides Caldwell County with this resource as well as other surrounding counties as needed.
- Youth Homes (Charlotte) contracts with us for Intensive Family Preservation Services
- Long term Well Being collaboration with THE DUKE ENDOWMENT providing services and tracking outcomes for former child welfare recipients

Private/For-profit corporations:

- HT Hackney provides free storage of frozen meals for senior nutrition program
- Working relationship with adult day care/day health, in-home aide providers, home health agencies, durable medical equipment, telephone alert providers and long term care facilities. Referrals to and from these various agencies as well as training provided for staff on an as needed basis.
- Adult Protective Services Staff provides training for staff of financial institutions regarding recognizing and reporting financial exploitation of disabled adults.
- Multiple relationships with area’s private therapists for work with Child Welfare and Family NET
- Clay Wilson and Associates work with Domestic Violence

TRANSPORTATION

MPO

Transportation Planning is administered by the WPCOG for four counties and 23 municipalities in the Unifour. The process of developing a 25-year Comprehensive Transportation Plan, with representatives from local governments throughout the region, is currently underway.

RPO

Transportation Planning is administered by the WPCOG for rural parts of four counties within the Unifour area. The process of developing a 25-year Comprehensive Transportation Plan, with representatives from local governments throughout the region, is currently underway.

Greenway Public Transportation System (formerly Piedmont Wagon)

Officials in Catawba, Alexander, Burke and Caldwell counties along with the municipalities of Hickory, Newton and Conover recently passed resolutions to create a regional transit authority. Called Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority, the organization is the first regional public transportation authority with consolidated urban-rural transit service in the state, known as Greenway Public Transportation. The transit authority assumed the operations of the rural and urban transit systems in the Unifour region on July 1, 2008.

UTILITIES AND ENGINEERING

Water/Sewer

Catawba County partners with Hickory, Conover, Newton, Maiden, Long View, Claremont and Catawba, Burke and Lincoln counties, and the City of Mooresville to extend water and sewer service to the County's unincorporated areas. In addition, many municipalities in the Unifour plan, construct and operate utility plant and distribution systems as partners.

Wastewater Sludge Management

Hickory, Conover, and Catawba County are part of a consortium created to manage the Regional Sludge Management Facility. Catawba County contracts its portion of the facility capacity to Claremont and Maiden.

Stormwater/Erosion Control

Catawba County partners with Hickory, Conover, Maiden, Long View, Claremont and Catawba to provide a local stormwater and sedimentation and erosion control program for the protection of regional water quality.

Solid Waste Management

Catawba County provides a regional landfill facility for solid waste disposal. Cities are provided a \$25 per ton credit for recyclables as an incentive to promote recycling. Through municipal partnerships the County also provides two Household Hazardous Waste and electronics collection events per year, as well as educational outreach for waste reduction and recycling to all citizens and area schools.

Building Code Compliance

Catawba County partners with Hickory, Conover, Newton, Maiden, Long View, Claremont, Catawba and Brookford and their extraterritorial jurisdictions, which includes areas in Burke and Caldwell Counties, to provide building codes

compliance. Catawba County performs plan review on all commercial projects. Catawba County also contracts with the City of Morganton to provide commercial plan review upon request. With a One-Stop Permitting approach, the County partners with the City of Hickory to provide a Permit Center in Hickory City Hall. A second Permit Center is located in Newton at the Government Center.