



Memo

Date: November 30, 2018

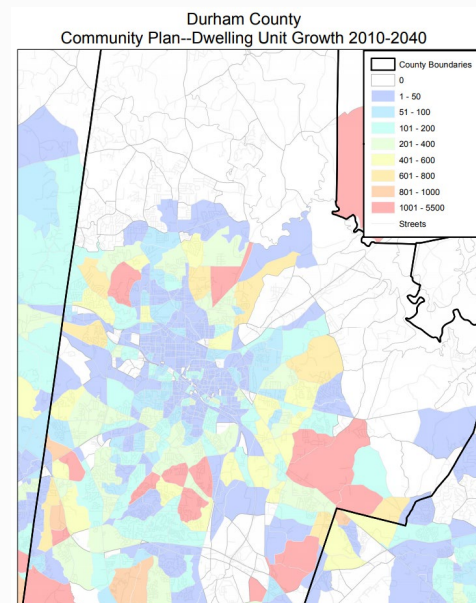
To: Elmo Vance, NCDOT
Through: Terry Bellamy, City of Durham Transportation
From: Ellen Beckmann, City of Durham Transportation
Subject: U-5720 Concepts

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on TIP project U-5720, US 70 upgrade from the East End Connector to Wake County. This is a significant project for the City of Durham with tremendous implications for growth in the eastern part of Durham County and effects on how our residents travel through our community. The City has reviewed the two concepts presented at the October/November 2018 public meetings and has the following comments.

As the Triangle grows, this centrally located area along US 70 near Research Triangle Park and with easy access to Durham and Raleigh will become increasingly developed with new residents and employment. While today there are some pockets of undeveloped land along US 70 between Durham and Raleigh, with growth pressure and the anticipated completion of the City's southeast regional sewage lift station in 2021, the City expects that many of the large tracts of land will be proposed for new subdivisions and developments in the coming years. The DCHC MPO's 2040 socio-economic forecasts expect this area to be in the highest category for dwelling unit growth in the county. The US 70 project needs to be designed to anticipate and accommodate this growth including providing adequate access to existing and future residents of Durham.

The two proposals for US 70 are not consistent with the adopted DCHC MPO and NCDOT Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) in their current form. The CTP envisions three interchanges along this route: Glover Road/Lynn Road extension, Miami Blvd/Mineral Springs Road, and Angier Avenue as well as grade separated crossings at Pleasant Drive and Page Road/Leesville Road. The concepts at the public meetings showed one interchange at Miami Blvd/Mineral Springs Road and grade separated crossings at Pleasant Drive and Page Road/Leesville Road. This is a significant decrease in connectivity for eastern Durham County, restricts access for residents of Durham to utilize the upgraded US 70 facility, and does not address the anticipated growth. US 70 would be a barrier for our community with this limited number of access points and connections.

In addition, the conceptual designs require that all residents in eastern Durham County will need to use the Miami Blvd/Mineral Springs Road interchange to access the facility. This is a very congested



intersection today, and funneling all access to this interchange will likely require widening of Sherron Road, Mineral Springs Road, Miami Boulevard as well as wide, multi-lane interchange ramps that will be difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to safely traverse. It will also result in circuitous and lengthy routes for many residents to get to US 70. Distributing access to US 70 at multiple interchanges will better serve eastern Durham County residents.

We understand that NCDOT plans to conduct a Service Road Study for this project. We enthusiastically support this and request that NCDOT consult the City on this study. The concepts presented to the public did not indicate where service roads would be provided and many of our residents were puzzled about how their neighborhoods would be connected to the future road network. There are multiple options for service roads depending on which concept is selected, and the location of these service roads is also affected by the provision of the additional interchanges that we are requesting. We would like to work closely with you on determining the solution for access on US 70.

The adopted CTP also includes multiple bicycle and pedestrian facilities both along and crossing US 70. A parallel multi-use path along US 70 is included in the CTP. The path could be located along the access roads as long as these result in a complete connected facility. A future greenway is planned to cross US 70 at Leesville Road, and bicycle facilities are planned to cross US 70 at Pleasant, the Glover/Lynn Connector, Miami/Sherron, Angier, Leesville, and Page. Bicycle facilities that cross US 70 at interchanges should be separated facilities such as multi-use paths or protected bike lanes and should not be located with crossings of free-flow right-turn movements. Pedestrian facilities are recommended on all roads in Durham by policy of the CTP and our adopted pedestrian plan. Many existing pedestrian facilities exist on US 70 and intersecting roadways. The function of these existing facilities should be replaced at no cost to the City of Durham.

The following comments are specific design considerations moving from west to east along US 70. Efforts should be made to minimize impacts to the two churches at Lynn Road and US 70. There have been multiple pedestrian crashes, including a fatality in August 2018, at the crossings of Lynn Road and Pleasant Drive. Despite very poor or non-existent pedestrian facilities, there is evident desire for the public to cross US 70 at these locations. Go Durham also currently has a bus route on Pleasant Drive and US 70 that may be changed with this project, but will likely still operate in the area and pedestrian access across US 70 to the bus stops will still be needed.

The CTP includes a Lynn Road Extension that would connect Lynn Road to US 70 south of Pleasant Drive and also connect to an extension of Glover Road to the west. We are requesting that NCDOT construct this road with the US 70 project, perhaps utilizing the shown re-routing of Lynn Road in the concept plans and using it as a parallel service road. It should also include an interchange with US 70 to the south of Pleasant Drive. This interchange is critical for ensuring that the residents of east Durham have adequate access to the upgraded US 70 facility. The selection of the north or south concept should be based on which option can most easily and with the least amount of impacts include this interchange and service road.

For the Miami Boulevard/Mineral Springs Road interchange, we strongly prefer the tight diamond interchange over the single point urban interchange (SPUI). Interchange designs with free-flow right-turn movements like SPUIs or DDIs are less preferred due to the conflicts that they pose for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. The Fayetteville and I-40 SPUI is the interchange with the most crashes in Durham County, and we do not want to replicate this problem in another location. The Bethesda community along Miami Boulevard is home to many community resources such as Bethesda Elementary School,

churches, Ruritan Club, Fire and EMS Station, restaurants, etc. While traffic congestion is a concern, maintaining pedestrian and bicycle access and neighborhood cohesion is also important in this area. A separated bicycle and pedestrian crossing of US 70 is the preferred solution at this interchange, and we suggest using the existing alignment of Mineral Springs/Miami that is expected to be abandoned for this connection.

We urge NCDOT to develop an alternative for the relocation of Mineral Springs to Sherron that minimizes the impact to existing residences. A lower design speed is encouraged, or a roundabout could be used at the point where the new road diverges from the existing road. We also recommend connecting Copper Leaf Parkway across US 70 to Angier Avenue or a service road to maintain access to the Brightleaf at the Park neighborhood.

The concept plans need to include an interchange between Miami and Page roads. The CTP envisions an interchange at Angier and an extension of Angier to the Northern Durham Parkway. This is critical to serve existing and future development. This project should also include the construction of a portion of Northern Durham Parkway to connect the existing road to US 70. There also needs to be a connection from Leesville to US 70. We are open to options that provide these connections through service roads, and we would like to explore these options further with NCDOT. Between the two concepts, the south option is preferred between Miami and Page as it provides the opportunity to use the existing US 70 as a service road to provide better access to the large undeveloped parcels on the north side.

This is a complex project with many different options for connectivity and access. We appreciate your attention to our comments and requests. We also look forward to working with you further on developing this transformational project for east Durham. The project will improve traffic congestion between Durham and Raleigh, but it should not create a barrier for residents of Durham as many freeway projects have done in the past. The residents of east Durham also need full consideration of adequate access to the roadway so they can experience the benefits of this project and not just the relocations and negative impacts. Please let us know if you have any questions about our comments on this project.