



Durham Chapel-Hill Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization

Member Organizations: Town of Carrboro, Town of Chapel Hill, Chatham County, City of Durham, Durham County, Town of Hillsborough, NC Department of Transportation, Orange County, GoTriangle

February 12, 2020

Secretary James H. Trogdon, III
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1501 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

Dear Secretary Trogdon:

In recent months the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO), and its member jurisdictions, have become well aware of the budgetary issues currently plaguing the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and affecting NCDOT's ability to move forward with projects in a timely manner. Recently, however, we have learned that some projects are being allowed to move forward with their current phase; for example, U-5717, a new interchange project at US 15/501 and Garrett Road in Durham, and I-3306AC, an interchange project at I-40 and NC-86 in Orange County, were recently removed from the suspension list and are proceeding with preliminary engineering.

While this is certainly good news and both projects are supported by both DCHC MPO and the municipalities, the methodology of why certain projects are released from suspension and others are not is unclear. Furthermore, the priority of our local governments has been the resumption of reimbursements for locally managed projects and the prioritization of critical safety, bicycle, and pedestrian projects over vehicular mobility projects. NCDOT previously communicated that it would allow for locally managed projects to proceed in their current phase with delayed reimbursement until at least May 2020, but has recently required that local governments accept delayed reimbursement to "an undetermined period of time." It is concerning that NCDOT is stretching out the delayed reimbursement schedule and is providing no firm timetable or order of priority for the resumption of reimbursement payments, while lifting the suspension from more expensive large highway projects. This shifts NCDOT's cash flow problem to local governments, and is particularly burdensome to smaller jurisdictions.

DCHC MPO requests an explanation from NCDOT regarding the methodology for release of projects from the suspension list, and an assessment of when locally managed projects can request reimbursement. Furthermore, DCHC MPO clarifies that its first priority during this period of restricted cash flow is to release the locally managed projects from the suspension list so that reimbursements to local governments can be reinstated.

Sincerely,

Wendy Jacobs, Chair
Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO



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