

Good morning, my name is Geoff Green and I'm a resident of Chapel Hill. I'm speaking on my own behalf. I am urging the MPO Board to ensure that the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan reflects the values professed by the local jurisdictions that make up this organization, that multimodal investment is critical and that climate change is a threat. For example, the Town of Chapel Hill has passed a resolution declaring a "climate emergency" which requires action "at emergency speed." Every elected official sitting here believes, I think, that climate change is real, and that business-as-usual is no longer acceptable.

The Canadian city planner Brent Toderian has said that city leaders need to "start budgeting & approving things that support your vision. Stop budgeting & approving things that don't." It's not enough to do the right things; we also need to stop doing the wrong things. Each alternative being presented for the 2050 MTP includes a lot of wrong things. Each alternative includes billions of dollars of highway widening and new highway construction. In each alternative, Interstate 40 is widened and an additional set of managed lanes are constructed. In each alternative, a quarter of a billion dollars is spent adding new lanes to NC 147. In each alternative, about \$200 million is spent turning 15-501 into a freeway. I appreciate that the Shared Leadership alternative does eliminate some highway projects that would induce sprawl, and also removes the freeway through downtown Durham, but it includes massive spending on highway projects like the ones I just listed. And these all are the wrong things. Take the Interstate 40 and NC 147 managed lane projects as an example. These projects cut the legs out from the commuter rail project, the region's major non-highway investment. The primary goal of the commuter rail project is to provide a fast and reliable trip between Durham, RTP, and Raleigh that isn't subject to traffic delays. The primary goal of managed lanes is exactly the same – to provide a fast and reliable trip between Durham, RTP and Raleigh by putting a price on highway capacity to manage its use. Commuter rail may be the right thing, but we shouldn't do the wrong thing by funneling a billion dollars into its competitor.

If this highway expansion plans come to fruition, it is hard to imagine how the local jurisdictions will accomplish any of their goals related to climate change.

Let me be clear, as a former member of regional planning staff who worked on the 2045 MTP, I have no qualms with anything that staff has done. Staff works for a board that approved two prior MTPs which featured massive highway

investments. Moreover, developing alternatives that modify these climate-busting projects would be in direct conflict with NCDOT's own plans and perhaps with our CAMPO neighbors who are partners in the development of the MTP. I fully realize that widening core highways like I-40 is a state priority. This preference is written into the STI law. Any call for change won't be well received by some powerful people. It falls to each of you, the officials elected to public office and appointed by your elected colleagues to this board, to make these hard calls and provide this leadership.

The 2050 MTP should rethink the wisdom of these big-ticket highway investments. Beyond that, it should identify, list, and price out critical investments in regional transportation mobility such as the triangle bikeway and transit investments, the same way that is done with highway projects, and not simply assume a bucket of money that will be spent somehow. Moreover, because we can see the effects of climate change every day, the 2050 MTP should not assume that in 30 years we will still be governed by the current STI rubric that funnels most money into highway projects. Instead, we should create a positive plan that reflects our vision and assumes our actions beginning in 10 and 20 years, after the end of the current STIP, will meet the demands of the time.

Given the deadline, it may be tough to get this all done. But we have to start so this MTP or, if necessary, the 2055 MTP really incorporates the MPO's goals and does not simply pair massive expansion in our roadway network with what are, by comparison, marginal transit and bicycle investments.

It's time to meet the moment. Each jurisdiction sitting here that has adopted a climate action plan recognizes that each jurisdiction is limited in what it can do alone. But on the regional level, you can do so much more. You are not just a rubber stamp for policies developed by others. You serve on a body established under federal law that is given the responsibility to manage the planning and development of our region's transportation system. Most of you, perhaps each of you, campaigned on climate change and the need for a transportation system that better reflects the values we share in Durham, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, and throughout Durham, Orange, and Chatham counties. An MTP that fully aligns with our values is an important step that can make a difference.

Thank you.



Comments made at the DCHC Public Hearing on Alternatives Analysis, Sep 1, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I'm John Tallmadge, Executive Director of Bike Durham. After the Board adopted goals that included zero deaths and serious injuries, zero disparity of access, and zero carbon emissions, we were optimistic that the 2050 Plan would chart a new course toward a safe, affordable, and sustainable transportation system for everyone, regardless of who they are or where they live. That's Bike Durham's vision for the future.

We were hopeful that the bold vision that the MPO adopted would drive the development of bold alternatives that would illustrate the likely difficult choices needed to achieve these goals. We grew concerned when the deficiency analysis largely addressed the issues of driver delay, driver commute time, and highway capacity - the same variables that are typically used - and measures of safety, carbon emissions, and disparity of access. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) was presented, but not in the context of carbon emissions.

We were disappointed to see the alternative scenarios presented for comment. The staff has not attempted to develop a scenario that could achieve the goals. The All Together alternative is the best of the bunch, but it does not rise to the occasion required.

We understand why this is the case, but we do not accept it. When urging you to adopt bold goals, we said that it takes a long time to turn a big ship onto a different course, and that's why it's important to turn the wheel hard now. It appears that in attempting to turn the wheel hard through bold goals, other problems have been revealed.

First, the navigation tools that the staff uses don't provide any visibility into impacts on safety, carbon emissions, or racial disparity of access. All we can see are delay, travel time, capacity, and mode share. What we don't measure, we don't manage. The answer is not to rely on changes to the travel demand model. The staff needs to develop new analytical approaches.

Second, the steering mechanisms are stuck. The alternatives accept the next 10 years as fixed, and the staff has found the model to be largely unresponsive to changes in the projects. The projects selected are all through technical staff, there is very little community engagement in the development of projects.

Third, the engine of transportation funding keeps chugging away, driving us in the same disastrous direction. When we limit our alternatives to what we can fund with existing laws and rules, then we cannot even see what it would take to achieve our goals. The final recommended plan needs to be fiscally constrained, that's required. But if alternatives were developed that achieved our goals, or even approached them, then we could all see what changes are going to be needed from the local, state, and federal levels.

The All Together alternative is the best of the bunch, but we'd like to point out a few ways in which it falls short.

- 1) There is no indication that the alternative is increasing funding to make our streets safer.
- 2) There is no indication that there is an increased investment in transportation demand management. We have just seen that the capacity for telework is much greater than we ever imagined.
- 3) There is no indication of investments in the infrastructure or incentives for electrification of our transportation system.
- 4) There is no indication of whether neighborhoods that are currently the heaviest users of public transportation will be closing the gap with neighborhoods that don't use public transportation in terms of access to jobs or other destinations within 45 minutes.
- 5) While the alternative includes the conversion of a portion of the Durham Freeway to a boulevard, which may be a good idea if we could make sure that the benefits accrue to the Black residents whose community was destroyed in the first place, but at the same time we assume that we'll push ahead with converting US70 and US15-501 into freeways.

It's time for the DCHC MPO Board to direct the staff to develop a bold scenario that gets us on the path to our goals. You need to find levers that will result in the creation of new navigation tools, that will unstick the steering wheel, and cut the engines to create time to fix those other problems. We ask that you start by directing the staff to develop another alternative that would address all three goals and reduce the drive alone mode share by 25% by 2050. Thank you.

Questions for the Alternatives Analysis

Equity: Can we move forward with alternatives analysis without having established the performance measures “based on race/ethnicity, income, and automobile ownership”? When will these be established and how will analyses retroactively account for them?

Safety: States that crash data “will be considered during the development of the 2050 MTP Preferred Option” with the goal to reduce these totals by 50% by 2035. How do these three alternatives, which account for negligible reduction in use of SOV, help reach that goal?

TCN: This is our only predictor for non-auto mode-shifting. Are these mapped? Do the Communities of Concern overlap with the TCNs? If not, how do these alternatives address non-auto safety for these communities?

Unaddressed from Bike Durham’s deficiency analysis comments:

- Employment growth is outpacing population growth in all MPO counties. This places further strain on the transportation network and has implications for increased travel times, especially for those who cannot afford to live in close proximity to “mode-rich” areas.
 - How does the correlation of population growth to employment growth impact Goal 3.B (zero disparity of access to jobs, etc)?
 - How can the data better address demand and travel of employees using non-vehicular modes, specifically in support of Goal 8.A?
 - We are predicting a 20% increase in non-motorized commuting between 2016 and 2050. Which communities are benefiting from this?
 - We are predicting a 19% decrease in transit commuting. Which communities are harmed by this?
- The data measures in the Deficiency Analysis are vehicle-centric and do not address Goal 4.C (increase in non-auto travel modes). In addition, the results point decidedly against Goal 7.B (more efficient transportation through TDM). There is minimal data showing the potential travel deficiencies across non-driving transportation modes, such as public transit. Vehicle-centric data metrics often fail to consider how changes in mode choice can increase capacity and improve travel times. Here we want to reiterate a previous concern of ours-- improvements for decreasing VHT generally point toward the need for measures to speed up traffic (i.e. capacity and speed). These vehicle-centric outcomes to decrease VHT are counter to Goals 1 and 4 of the 2050 MTP. We ask for similar measures in the Deficiency Analysis to be considered for other mode options, including bus, rail, and biking.
 - For example, what are the 15-minute and 30-minute travel isochrones for bus service?
 - What percentage of the projected population will be within ¼ mile of frequent transit or ½ mile of frequent fixed-route transit?

- How do the vehicle measures for VMT and congestion account for shifts in transportation mode choice away from driving in single-occupancy vehicles?
- Please consider using ITDP's *Indicators of Sustainable Mobility*. Two measures - block density and weighted population density - are good proxies for whether land use policies are resulting in outcomes that encourage walking, biking and using transit. This is especially important given the population projections for the region.