

Workshop 3 Public Comments

Level of Agreement Responses

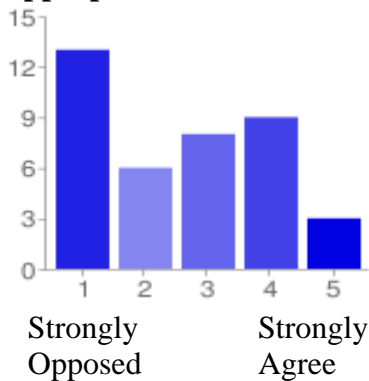
On Tuesday, May 11, the NC-54/I-40 Corridor Study project team held the third and final public involvement workshop and presented the preferred scenario. The scenario included land use designations, transit centers, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and a “superstreet concept” for NC-54. Following the conclusion of Workshop 3, participants were encouraged to complete a Comment Sheet, which included eight statements about the land use, transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and roadway improvements presented in the preferred scenario. Participants scaled their level of agreement with the statements, which will help the project team assess the public’s opinion about various elements of the preferred scenario.

Each of the eight statements below are accompanied by a bar chart illustrating each respondent’s level of agreement, the count of the number of respondents who chose each level of agreement, the percent of respondents who chose each level of agreement, and the combined percent of respondents who were generally opposed to or in agreement with the statement.

Note: The number of respondents varies because not all respondents provided a response for all eight statements. The percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, so they may not add up to exactly 100%.

Land Use Designations and Transit Improvements

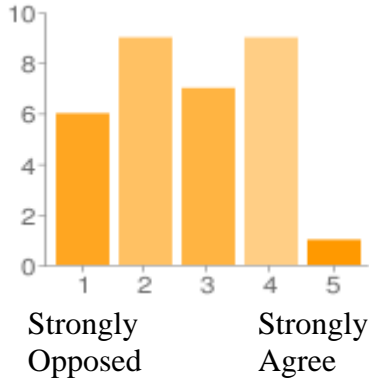
1. I like the land use designations and think they are in the right places, at appropriate scale and intensity



1 - Strongly Opposed	13	33%	
2	6	15%	49%
3	8	21%	21%
4	9	23%	31%
5 - Strongly Agree	3	8%	
Total Respondents		39	

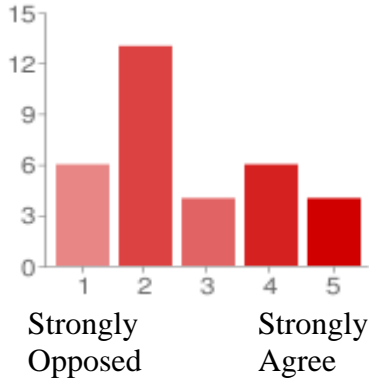
Workshop 3 Public Comments

2. The land use designations and transit improvements fit with the proposed roadway/bike/ped improvements.



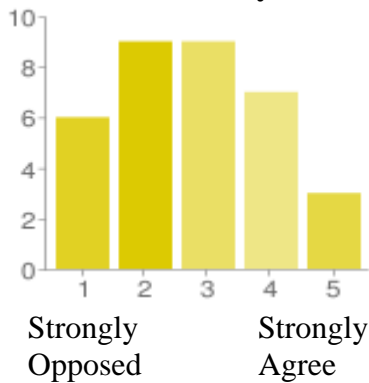
1 - Strongly Opposed	6	19%	47%
2	9	28%	
3	7	22%	22%
4	9	28%	31%
5 - Strongly Agree	1	3%	
Total Respondents		32	

3. The phasing approach will enable transit to succeed in this corridor, while providing housing choice.



1 - Strongly Opposed	6	18%	58%
2	13	32%	
3	4	12%	12%
4	6	18%	30%
5 - Strongly Agree	4	12%	
Total Respondents		33	

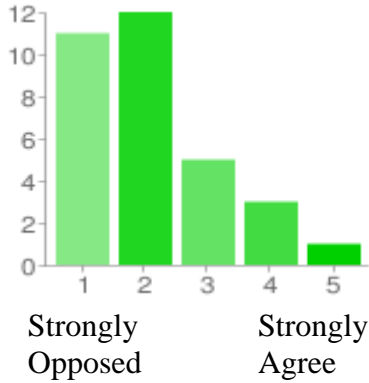
4. The draft Blueprint will improve the bicycle and pedestrian system and increase access and mobility in the study.



1 - Strongly Opposed	6	18%	44%
2	9	26%	
3	9	26%	26%
4	7	21%	29%
5 - Strongly Agree	3	9%	
Total Respondents		34	

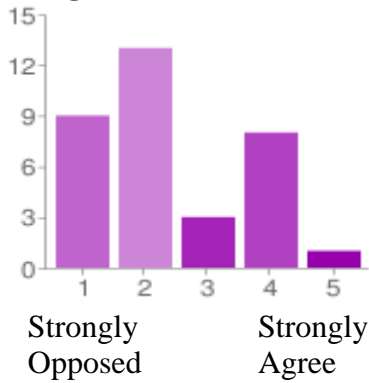
Workshop 3 Public Comments

5. The example bicycle and pedestrian improvements illustrated will solve problems at critical locations.



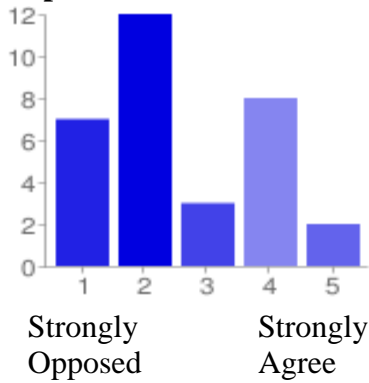
1 - Strongly Opposed	11	34%	72%
2	12	38%	
3	5	16%	16%
4	3	9%	13%
5 - Strongly Agree	1	3%	
Total Respondents		32	

6. The draft Blueprint's roadway improvement strategy will improve vehicle travel along the NC-54 corridor.



1 - Strongly Opposed	9	26%	65%
2	13	38%	
3	3	9%	9%
4	8	24%	26%
5 - Strongly Agree	1	3%	
Total Respondents		34	

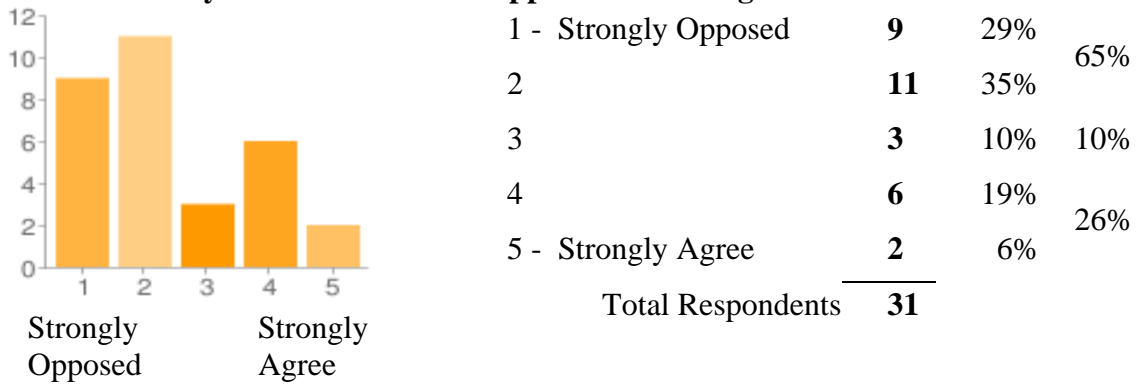
7. The roadway modifications consider the proposed land use and transit system improvements.



1 - Strongly Opposed	7	22%	59%
2	12	38%	
3	3	9%	9%
4	8	25%	31%
5 - Strongly Agree	2	6%	
Total Respondents		32	

Workshop 3 Public Comments

8. The roadway modifications will support the traffic growth in the corridor.



The number of respondents was low, compared to the actual number of participants who attended the third workshop. Generally, these level of agreement responses are skewed towards “strongly opposed” and “opposed,” but three statements were especially weighted in opposition: #5 - bicycle and pedestrian improvements will solve critical problems, #6 - the roadway improvement strategy will improve vehicle travel, and #8 - the roadway modifications support traffic growth.

Also, while the number of participants who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” was generally in the 26-31% range for most statements, only 13% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement about bicycle and pedestrian improvements solving critical problems (#5).

Workshop 3 Public Comments

Comments

The workshop participants were also encouraged to submit their comments in response to the elements in the preferred scenario. Below is the summary of comments submitted on comment cards, comments submitted by email, and verbal comments made during the workshop.

Light Rail Transit

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

Many participants advocated moving the light rail transit line out of the environmentally sensitive area when it leaves Leigh Village and heads to 54. They all suggest running the line parallel to NC-54. Several others did not want the LRT line to run through Meadowmont, based on the proposed development and park and ride lot locations. Many commenters indicated that light rail must be in place before the density developments could start construction. One commenter saw the light rail as promoting growth in the area, which that commenter did not want. Participants stressed the need to connect the LRT line for Chapel Hill, Durham, RTP and RDU Airport.

Verbal comments made during the workshop:

One commenter asked if safety along the transit line was considered for the transit centers, since density was going to be so high and the goal was to make it very walkable. Another commenter was concerned with the current proposed alignment of the light rail because it runs through ecologically sensitive area. That person wondered if the light rail could run along 54. A last comment questioned if light rail was contingent on Wake County, Orange County, and Durham County all giving their approval.

Mass Transit and Park and Ride Lots

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

Many commenters were against the proposed park and ride lot near the Falconbridge neighborhood, at the wastewater plant, stating that it could cause dangerous traffic issues in that neighborhood and would exacerbate traffic problems at the NC-54/Farrington Rd intersection. One wondered why a park and ride was proposed on Farrington Rd, when the superstreet concept would essentially close Farrington Rd at the NC-54 intersection – suggesting that people would be motivated to cut through the Falconbridge neighborhood rather than back track around Barbee Chapel in order to go to points east or to gain access to I-40. Another commenter believes Farrington Road would become more congested with a park and ride, as well as with the addition of a transfer station in the Falconbridge Shopping Center. While the intention would be for commuters to park in the Park & Ride, the commenter thinks commuters will opt to park closer – in the shopping center at the corner of NC-54 and Farrington Road and on the streets in the neighborhood. They will cut through the neighborhood to reduce congested areas, and to avoid the traffic patterns created by the Super Streets. Commenters suggested locating the park and ride lots east of I-40 and NC-54, along the highway, and out of the corridor. One commenter included the caveat that shuttle service be provided and coordinated to serve both Chapel Hill and Durham. Other suggested locations included Southpoint Mall and New Hope Commons. This suggestion was supported by a commenter who felt the proposed park

Workshop 3 Public Comments

and ride lot at Leigh Village would only serve to benefit UNC and would actually hinder traffic flow because, regardless of how commuters accessed that park and ride, the traffic into the park and ride would create a bottleneck because it would be coming off I-40. One commenter stated that the proposed NC-751 park and ride lot would not logically serve Chapel Hill. In general, participants recognized the need for a more robust transit system that would serve Chapel Hill, Durham, RTP and RDU Airport, among other locations.

One commenter suggested installing bus-only lanes on NC-54 to improve traffic flow during rush hour in the morning and evening.

Verbal comments made during the workshop:

Participants focused mostly on the park and ride lots proposed on Farrington and near 751. One commenter thought the Farrington park and ride would cause a lot more traffic issues on NC-54 and another asked whether impacts of the increased traffic on Farrington Road had been analyzed and accounted for. The comment about the park and ride lot near 751 supported it, believing that it would relieve some of the traffic heading to 54. However, another commenter said that people would not use that park and ride because they would not want to travel out of their way instead of heading straight into Chapel Hill.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

Participants were divided over the proposed bicycle and pedestrian system. While many supported the enhancements and felt they addressed the needs of the bike/ped community, others felt that the improvements were not enough, and still others did not believe there are enough users to support enhancing the system.

Safety was a major concern on all fronts. Participants took issue against the proposed separated bike lane dividing the right turn lane and through lane near the 15-501 interchange, stating safety concerns. Others advocated for bike lanes or paved lanes separate from the main road or wider and “protected” lanes. One commenter supported the bike lanes and their enhancement to safety, especially on the eastern side of the corridor.

Several comments asked to link the bike trail to the American Tobacco Trail in Durham and RTP. Others suggested a trail to connect Eastwood Park with the nearby proposed transit center. Another requested bike routes along Barbee Chapel, Farrington, Stagecoach, NC-751, Scott King, and Massey Chapel roads because of the number of commuters who bike that path from Chapel Hill to RTP.

Verbal comments made during the workshop:

There was opposition against the dedicated bike lane near the 54/15-501 intersection. People believed it would not be safe for bikers and would not be used. People do use the underpass to cross 54 near Meadowmont. Before major changes are made on the road to facilitate pedestrian crossings, commenters encouraged study on the use of the underpass. A commenter stated that the bike/ped path proposed to University Mall may not work

Workshop 3 Public Comments

because that path is very wet. Another commenter asked if the bike/ped path in Little Creek will connect to the American Tobacco Trail.

Roadway Enhancement/Superstreet Concept/NC-54

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

There were numerous concerns about the “superstreet concept,” including accessibility issues, impacts to neighborhoods, and lack of addressing congestion problems.

Commenters referred to the existing superstreet at 15-501/Erwin Road and mentioned how it did not improve traffic conditions and has made it worse at times. Commenters were skeptical of how it would improve vehicle travel along the corridor and how it would support future traffic growth. Commenters were concerned with the impacts on access to neighborhoods and retail areas along NC-54. One commenter was concerned with the impacts on safety to bicyclists and pedestrians traveling along NC-54. Many participants who were against the superstreet concept advocated the use of flyovers instead. The fact that it would be an interim or short-term solution designed to be a cheap alternative to the long-term solution was also a point on contest.

Some commenters did support the “superstreet concept” and believed it would alleviate some of the congestion issues in the corridor. Support was shown for the proposed designs at major intersections. One commenter stated the need for dedicated merge lanes at the U-turn areas for the concept to succeed. Another commenter suggested looking at allowing vehicles to go straight across 54 from any of the side streets, but continue forcing left turns to U-turn.

Some commenters stated the need to widen 54, even up to eight lanes. However, one commenter stated that the problem is “peak time” travel problems, where the congestion only occurs during morning and evening rush hours. This commenter believed travel demand management strategies, not road widening, would address congestion issues. This commenter was also concerned with the environmental impacts from widening NC-54. This commenter provided several alternative solutions: including 1) add one HOT lane in either direction for carpoolers (charge SOVs for use of the lane); 2) work with UNC to stagger employees’ shifts so that employees enter and exit the corridor at different times; and 3) increase parking fees at UNC campus

Verbal comments made during the workshop:

There were diverse comments about the superstreet proposal. There were several concerns related to the actual learning curve, whether the superstreet actually reduces wait time, if it was worth spending money on that improvement instead of other alternatives, and if that improvement would actually encourage even more traffic on the corridor. One person commented on their positive experience with the superstreet at Erwin Road. One commenter suggested making the superstreet U-turn a dedicated lane for easy merging and so signals can be eliminated. Another solution was to have dedicated lanes on 54 straight to 40 for cars that want to travel straight through the corridor and a dedicated lane for cars that need to access side streets.

I-40/NC-54/Farrington Interchange

Workshop 3 Public Comments

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

Commenters provided suggestions to improve the interchange and varied widely. One commenter suggested routing traffic via NC-751 to enter Chapel Hill; another suggested a new I-40 exit at Ephesus Church Road or a new I-40 exit directly to the Leigh Village park and ride lot; and another commenter stated the need for “overpasses or interchanges to go north-south across I-40 from Farrington Road.” Some commenters believed the superstreet concept at this interchange in particular will not address or solve the traffic issues and might bring economic harm to businesses at the intersection. Commenters did agree that some kind of improvement was needed, and sooner rather than later. This might be one of the first things to address in the corridor.

Regarding the proposed changes at this intersection, one commenter had this statement. “The rerouted Farrington Road traffic will travel along a segment of what is now Celeste Circle and will utilize the current Celeste Circle/NC54 intersection. Placement of the rerouted road and widening of the Celeste Circle segment will require the removal of several homes in Eastwood Park and an adjacent neighborhood. A prior developer of Leigh Village believed that four houses would need to be removed. Remaining homes in Eastwood Park would be adversely affected. For example, a couple of homes will end up with a major road in their front yard and will be physically separated from the rest of the neighborhood. Two reasons not to reroute Farrington Road are suggested here:

- First, if the superstreet plan proposed by the corridor study is accepted, the current Farrington Road intersection will be largely atrophied, and the adverse effects of this intersection on traffic flow will be greatly reduced.
- Second, there is an alternative to locating the road through Eastwood Park. It should be possible to move the planned intersection about fifty yards to the northeast. This would put the rerouted Farrington Road behind the northeastern-most houses on Celeste Circle, instead of in front of them. The exact location of this road is as follows. As one exits NC-54 and enters Celeste Circle, the first building on the right (on the corner of the Service Road and Celeste Circle) is the Dermatology Center/Urgent Health Clinic. To the right of this Dermatology Building is a space where the proposed road would be located. The next object past this space is the Carolina Crossing Building. Thus as one travels on the Service Road from Celeste Circle towards Farrington Road, one encounters the Dermatology Clinic, the space for a road, the Carolina Crossing Building (a commercial establishment), then other commercial/office buildings, and then Farrington Road. Although moving the rerouted Farrington Road several yards closer to the northeast decreases its planned distance from the interstate, it is still much further from the interstate than the current Farrington Road and seems a reasonable compromise considering the insult to Eastwood Park that would be avoided. This newly proposed path for a rerouted Farrington Road makes sense in the context of the superstreet proposal. It is noted that currently across NC-54 from Celeste Circle is Falconbridge Road. In the superstreet proposal, traffic originating on the rerouted Farrington and Falconbridge roads is allowed to turn left or right onto NC54, and no left turns are allowed off of NC54 onto rerouted Farrington or Falconbridge Roads. Consequently, it is not necessary for the rerouted Farrington and Falconbridge Roads to be aligned "head to head". The

Workshop 3 Public Comments

rerouted Farrington and Falconbridge Roads would be offset slightly (about 50 yards), but would be so close that they would constitute a double T arrangement and stop lights at each intersection could readily be synchronized with one another. In order for the rerouting of Falconbridge Road proposed here to work, it would make sense to atrophy the current Celeste Circle/NC54 intersection, by completely blocking direct access between Celeste Circle and NC54. To recapitulate, the plan for rerouting Farrington Road proposed here will not require loss of residences or serious adverse effects upon residences in or adjacent to Eastwood Park. The only structure in the path of the route proposed here is an unused small distribution warehouse. In the context of the superstreet, the adverse effects of present and anticipated Farrington Road traffic on the Corridor would be mitigated by a combination of two mechanisms, the first being the partial atrophy of the current Farrington Road and second, the additional connection of the rerouted Farrington road which would allow left turns onto NC54 at a location significantly further from the interstate than the current Farrington Road/NC54 intersection. The eastern end of the NC54 Corridor under study is challenging with respect to heavy traffic demands and the well being of local communities, and the Farrington Road plan proposed here is a reasonable compromise.”

A business owner was particularly concerned with the traffic flow and economic impacts to the shopping center off Farrington Road on the north side of NC-54. The business owner stated that the additional lane on NC-54 to get onto I-40 greatly improved traffic flow at that intersection, even on Saturday game days. A resident located off Farrington Road echoed the traffic flow sentiments and was also concerned about the increase of traffic on safety. That commenter said the community clubhouse and swimming pool are adjacent to Farmington Rd, which is the street that wraps around the back side of the shopping center. Members walk and bike to the clubhouse, so the increase in traffic can have a major impact on local residents’ accessibility to the clubhouse and swimming pool.

A few commenters were concerned that these drastic changes were first presented at the latest workshop and that there was no prior indication that major changes were going to be proposed for the intersection. Commenters worried that the proposed changes were made without any public input.

Collector Street Plan and other connecting streets

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

Comments were generally supportive of the Collector Street Plan and wanted it implemented soon. There were several comments of opposition to the currently-planned alignment of Southwest Durham Drive via Meadowmont Lane, mostly because of its close proximity to a school and a senior center. Instead, commenters stated that SW Durham Drive should be connected to George King Road. However, one commenter stated he heard from Meadowmont residents who attended the Collector Street Plan Meetings that those residents felt that the Southwest Durham Drive connection to Meadowmont Lane would be a plus in enhancing their choices for access to/egress from their community. The commenter believed it would also provide an alternative for

Workshop 3 Public Comments

pedestrian and bicycle traffic which might otherwise pass through the region of the Corps of Engineers Land. The commenter also stated that, at the Chapel Hill town hall meeting, the Transportation Department representative responded to a question by stating that Meadowmont Lane had been constructed properly to serve its function as the southern end of Southwest Durham Drive; thus this commenter believes this intersection, which is about 9 lanes wide by 6 lanes wide would be a good intersection to use.

A direct connection to 54 from George King Road, and not through Crossland Drive, was proposed by several commenters.

Commenters advocated that the Collector Street Plan preserve neighborhoods and not channel traffic through them and deteriorate the neighborhoods. One commenter was concerned about traffic impacts from funneling traffic down Farrington Road and requested additional traffic studies to assess how that would affect traffic, access, and the businesses. Another commenter proposed two alternative solutions: 1) Target the area near the former Ecko warehouse; or 2) reroute Farrington Road through George King Road, currently a gravel road at the end of the Celeste Circle neighborhood.

One commenter focused on the area east of 15-501 Morgan Creek-Kings Mill and suggested “moving the big roads below the ground” because the commenter was concerned that the proposed addition lanes on NC-54 would “lock residents of the neighborhood in.”

Verbal comments made during the workshop:

Regarding the collector street system, participants had a few comments for specific streets. The participants noted that the collector street designation from George King Road straight down to NC-54 is wrong. (The project team will correct the alignment.) There was major concern with one of the proposed connector roads behind the shopping center – participants said that area was a neighborhood and a community pool and should not be a connector street and attract vehicles because it currently serves many children and pedestrians. One commenter questioned whether the SW Durham arterial road is coming to Meadowmont Lane and if it shouldn't connect to George King Road instead, because near future development will be closer to George King Road. There were many concerns expressed about traffic on Meadowmont Lane in the future and the impacts it would have on the walkability of the community. A last comment urged consideration of traffic impacts because of Chapel Hill's close proximity to RTP and the travel patterns between the two areas.

Development

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

There were several comments about the Leigh Village development, possibly because the workshop group used the Leigh Village location to illustrate a possible high-density transit center development. Commenters were concerned that Leigh Village was designed solely to support light rail and that it would increase congestion. It was also seen as unrealistic and encouraging unwanted growth in the corridor.

Workshop 3 Public Comments

Land Use Designations

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

In general, commenters believed the land use designations were too dense and showed high growth that the residential community does not support. The proposed density was seen as unsustainable (especially at the Leigh Village development), only there to support light rail transit, and unrealistic, and having adverse environmental impacts. There were concerns about development near Farrington Road and how it might impact the senior assisted-living facility in the area. However, some participants did support the transit-supportive development and feel it will address future needs.

Another commenter felt the mixed use (tall buildings and retail on the ground floor) will not necessarily bring foot traffic or the vibrancy that is described when located on vast wide highways. Much of the area along 54 is low lying and adjacent to Jordan Lake, a major drinking water resource and the residents in this area depend on surface water for their water supply. Chapel Hill and Durham should not be encouraging major increases in building intensities so near buffer areas of Jordan Lake, a drinking water supply for the region.

A number of participants wanted Eastwood Park to be designated low density residential and did not want to see any new roads introduced into the neighborhood. Another wanted to see Eastwood Park incorporated into Leigh Village and yet another suggested turning Eastwood Park into a parking garage and office complex to siphon some traffic off the corridor earlier. One commenter added the necessity to consider the ecological sensitivity of the Waterfowl Impoundment Area at the southern end of George King Road.

Verbal comments made during the workshop:

The participants did not have major comments about the land use designations, but there were differences in opinion on the density. One commenter was opposed to the dense, mixed-use development because those would bring more cars and congestion to the corridor. Another commenter supported high density but believed the community needed education about the positive aspects of high density and also needs to develop a concise vision to guide development. Another commenter suggested that, besides density, access, time, and distance should also be considered when developing the ¼ and ½ mile radius transit centers.

Other

Summary of written comments submitted on comment cards and by email:

Participants submitted comments unrelated to the above topics. One commenter was concerned that this plan covers two counties and the implications of that for economic development. The commenter was particularly concerned with the tax burden on residents for non-residents to use the park and ride and free bus transportation. Another commenter continued to advocate for an alternative southern route around Chapel Hill to alleviate traffic coming from Chatham County, where development is occurring rapidly and from where a significant amount of traffic is entering the corridor. A comment was made that the proposed scenario seems to favor the needs of UNC over the residents living along the corridor, and another echoed that sentiment, stating the need for someone

Workshop 3 Public Comments

to advocate the needs of Durham residents. Another commenter stressed that the assumptions guiding the study were made by “outsiders” and not submitted by residents in the corridor.

One commenter suggested lowering the speed limit to 35 mph on NC-54 to reduce the regional utility of the Corridor (thus reducing traffic) and would, to some degree, address safety concerns.

One commenter made this statement: “I would be very interested in knowing not only about congestion in general but I would be especially interested to know the duration of rush “hour” under the various scenarios that were considered and how they compare with the scenario that they decided upon in the third Workshop, with the superstreet arrangement. I hope that when the final scenario is presented to the governing bodies and the TAC, these interesting data will be made available. I would expect others with a more pragmatic view, including those underwriting the Study, the local citizens and the commuters also to be interested in what congestion will look like in the future, and how the Study plan will address this issue. In summary, how long will rush hour last with the superstreet plan and how will it compare with the duration of rush hour associated with the other plans considered? I honestly feel totally out of the loop as far as what to expect from these plans and sense that a catastrophe is within the realm of possibility. Consequently, to protect the folks who live near the Corridor and those who use the Corridor, it seems appropriate that the final Corridor Study plan should include a moratorium under which there will be no development in the Corridor until after proven capacity for handling the increase in associated traffic is made available.”

Another commenter stated, “What does one experience as they exit the interstate and enter Chapel Hill? With exceptions at the strip malls, for the most part, there is a relaxed, comfortable rural feel. This helps keep down the road rage which can at times be aroused by the traffic. Along the Corridor, there are numerous neighborhoods and offices close to NC54, but for the most part they are screened by landscaping. A noticeably different view is presented by my neighborhood, Eastwood Park. There is no effective barrier between Eastwood Park and NC54, and with the widening of NC54, the highway will be quite close to homes there. A theme universally utilized in all kinds of design, be it interior, landscaping, architecture or whatever, is continuity. There needs to be an effective level of landscaping/hardscaping between Eastwood Park and NC54 to confer a sense of continuity to the corridor. This is one of the few areas of the corridor where utility wires on telephone poles are prominently displayed. These wires/poles are not attractive, and the landscaping should be “beefy” enough to hide these from view. Aside from the esoteric contribution, a consistent background (that is, landscaping such as that seen across the highway, at Falconbridge), would make it less distracting for NC54 traffic maneuvering through intersections or a superstreet.”