

01-16-2019 Town Council Meeting
Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #10: North South Bus Rapid Transit - Locally Preferred Alternative Update

Council Question: Has this been looked at by an urban designer? This is still a plan that widens MLK from Estes to 40 and doesn't really address activating the street, economic development, or making the streetscape more appealing. I think these should all be issues that are included in the BRT project, not just looking at this from a purely transit perspective.

Staff Response: *We agree and while this is a major transit investment, our interest is in improving connectivity (beyond transit – for bikes and pedestrians, as well) and supporting planned and proposed development in the corridor, including designing stations to integrate with neighborhoods. As we move into the 30% design phase for the project, Council and Community input, along with adopted Land Use Plan and the purpose and need for the project will continue to guide us:*

- *Make transit more efficient and attractive*
- *Improve connectivity along the corridor*
- *Improve connectivity of the corridor to the region*
- *Support planned land uses*
- *Contribute to regional equity, sustainability, and quality of life*
- *Develop a community-supported project*

While this project is just starting the 30% design phase, we will explore with the study committees, Transit Partners and Council, standards, design criteria, and other urban design and landscaping concepts for consideration. Specific design elements and treatments will be determined in future design phases. Additionally, these concepts will be coordinated with the Community Design Commission and other Town Boards/Commissions.

Station area development will be also addressed in the LUMO rewrite, which will inform later phases of the project.

Council Question: Would you ask staff to explain in their presentation how there will be room to construct a dedicated lane between Eubanks and Estes? I'm interested in how it would impact the proposed redevelopment of the land now home to the Tar Heel Mobile Home Park, the approved SUP for more apartments along MLK in Timber Hollow, the steep drop-off of land along Shadowood and the two newly renovated gas stations south of Homestead.

Staff Response: *Portions of the dedicated lane would be constructed using property that is currently in the grassy median/divider. There are segments of road where the additional right of way will come from the shoulders, and in some cases will have impacts with private property (the extent of these impacts will be determined in the 30% design phase of the project). In other*

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segments, due to the topography, there is potential that a retaining wall will become necessary to accommodate the additional lanes made necessary by BRT.

Council Question: I've heard rumors that the Northfield BRT stop will be removed in favor of adding a stop at Homestead Road. Is that true?

Staff Response: *Stations on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. at Homestead Rd have been added to the plan following community and study committee input. The Northfield Stations remain in the plan and staff has not been involved in discussions about removing these stations.*

Council Question: There is currently no bike lane between South Rd & Pittsboro/S. Columbia & North St (basically our downtown section) and often one of the two traffic lanes is blocked for delivery trucks. Can staff please take some time during presentation to discuss how the BRT lane might work in these areas and where bike lanes might go? Arguably if we want students and employees to NOT drive downtown (and to bike or take BRT), then this area is the most important. It's pretty easy to see how BRT can fit into MLK, but I am not clear on how it can fit into downtown.

Staff Response: *Unfortunately there is no additional public right-of-way on the road segments through Downtown Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina, so road expansions will not be an option. With the advent of BRT, delivery trucks will likely be excluded from using parts of Columbia to unload goods, or will have to adhere to scheduling that will not negatively affect BRT vehicles. Bicycles will be provided the opportunity to utilize the BRT lanes in areas where bicycle lanes are not available. Additionally, the project will incorporate multi-use paths on both sides of the corridor for 80% of the corridor. In all other areas, the project will make connections/improvements consistent with approved Bicycle and Pedestrian plans for the Town and University (with non-local funds), which may provide opportunities to explore other options for bicycle-pedestrian connections.*

Council Question: What would be the costs associated with each of the LPA options, besides the DTCC extension?

Staff Response: *The cost (in 2015 dollars) to build the following alternatives would be: Alternative 6-1 would cost \$96.8 million; Alternative 6-2 would cost \$105.9 million; and Alternative 6-3 would cost \$105.4 million. The annual cost to operate and maintain the North-South BRT line would be \$3.4 million (with no difference between any of the alternatives).*

Council Question: Can you give us a sense of what each of the discussion participants referred to on p. 183 of the packet said regarding the extension of the NSBRT line to Durham Tech?

Staff Response: *Most of the comments and discussion on the extension to Durham Tech came from the Town of Hillsborough and Orange County. After receiving the results of the technical*

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work, both Hillsborough and Orange County discussed the high costs of providing increased transit service and the amount of transit riders was not cost effective at this time to make a transit investment in the corridor to Durham Tech. Further discussion resulted in a recommendation to relook at increased transit service to Durham Tech once the North-South BRT project has been built and operational for a couple of years.

Council Question: Referring to p. 195 of the packet, should bike boxes along MLK Blvd (like the intersection of Roberson & Rosemary St) or else possible future requests for such facilities also be a consideration?

Staff Response: *It is our assumption that future requests for bike boxes and other active transportation solutions will be considered at all locations along the North-South BRT route.*