



*Connecting all points of the Triangle*

## D-O LRT Project

### Town of Chapel Hill: Tree Preservation and Replanting

One of the issues that has been important in the discussions to date between the Chapel Hill Town Council and GoTriangle has been tree preservation and related planting efforts. Following is a summary of the approach that GoTriangle will be using along the alignment of the Durham-Orange (D-O) Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project within Chapel Hill.

1. Provisions of Chapel Hill's Land Use Management Ordinance do not apply to the construction of the D-O LRT line, because GoTriangle is a subdivision of the State of NC, no buildings are involved, and NC General Statutes prescribe that zoning ordinances shall not apply in these circumstances.
2. Tree Preservation: Chapel Hill's tree protection rules are part of the zoning ordinance, and accordingly do not apply to this project. However, GoTriangle considers its relationship with Chapel Hill to be a partnership, and GoTriangle shares Chapel Hill's opinions about the value of tree preservation. Accordingly, GoTriangle is including provisions for tree preservation in its project implementation and construction strategy.

The approach to tree preservation along the transit line corridor within Chapel Hill's jurisdiction will be as follows:

- a. The route of the Light Rail Transit line has been established, and the specific layout and location of the tracks themselves are being finalized.
- b. Construction details are being prepared as part of the development of final (100%) project plans. These construction details will delineate the specific areas where land disturbance will be necessary in order to construct the tracks and supporting component infrastructure. In preparing these plans, the GoTriangle team will be working with Chapel Hill and University staff to identify, using aerial photography and local knowledge, areas along the corridor that are especially sensitive, where attention to tree preservation at the edges of clearing limits, and possible installation of tree protection fencing in those areas, may be appropriate.
- c. The areas of land disturbance will be shown on final plans, and the delineation of permanent easements, acquisition of property, rights-of-way, and construction easements will be pursued accordingly. The boundaries of disturbance will appear on final plans labeled as "Temporary Construction Easements" boundaries (TCE boundaries).



- d. The tree protection fencing described in item b. above will be installed in those identified sensitive areas prior to the commencement of clearing and land disturbance.
    - e. It will be the expectation that clearing of vegetation within TCE boundaries will occur, and that areas outside of TCE boundaries will be left undisturbed. However, there may be safety reasons that emerge during construction regarding specific trees outside of the TCE boundaries, which may require removal of such trees. Issues could include the presence of large trees near the track that could fall on the track or trees that have been damaged. The GoTriangle team will consult with Chapel Hill and University staff if such circumstances emerge, regarding appropriate actions.
3. Planting and Replanting: The GoTriangle/D-O LRT Project Team, under the guidance of the project landscape architect, will continue to evaluate opportunities for replanting along the corridor. Opportunities for replanting are constrained by the narrow width of the corridor and limited right-of-way, safety-related requirements which establish minimum vertical and horizontal separation between planting and the tracks and overhead electrical (catenary) wires, and related issues. There are two reasons why vegetation (including trees) will need to be cleared: (1) Permanent clearing needed to allow for safe and efficient operation of the D-O LRT system upon completion of construction; and (2) Clearing that is needed to allow access to construction areas, and necessary clearing related to construction activity, but do not need to be permanently cleared of vegetation.
  - Regarding type (1): Areas that need to be permanently cleared, but not areas with tracks, pavement, or structures, will be replanted with grass or low-lying shrubbery for screening and stormwater management purposes.
  - Regarding type (2): Areas that need to be temporarily cleared of vegetation for purposes of access or construction activity will be replanted for stormwater management, screening and tree canopy purposes. GoTriangle will work with staff from the Town and University to identify areas which, to the extent feasible, could be replanted to reflect the character of the landscapes in those areas prior to the commencement of construction activity. Efforts will be made to plant trees in the species similar the trees that were lost, and to plant understory vegetation to help achieve screening and stormwater management.

