

01-30-2019 Town Council Meeting
Responses to Council Questions #1

ITEM #2: Authorize the Town Manager to Enter into a Municipal Agreement with NCDOT and Accept Federal Funds for Construction of the Homestead Road Sidewalk Project

Council Question: Does the Homestead sidewalk project include the section belonging to UNC? And will it result in sidewalks on both sides of Homestead, or just the south side?

Staff Response: *The project's scope does include the section through the property owned by UNC. The University has notified the Town of its intention to participate in the project by providing the necessary right-of-way. The project's scope will complete a sidewalk path on both sides of Homestead.*

Council Question: Will the Homestead Road Sidewalk Project require a widening of the road to accommodate the bike lanes?

Staff Response: *The project does include the addition of a 5' wide bike lane in both directions which does require the widening of Homestead road up to 5' on both sides along most of the project's area.*

Council Question: I am unfamiliar with STBGDA, but how does the Surface Transportation Block Grant Direct Attributable work?

Staff Response: *Surface Transportation Block Grant Direct Attributable (STBGDA) funds go directly to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for disbursement within the MPO's jurisdiction. STBGDA is one of our most flexible funding sources and can be used for a variety of projects and programs, including planning staff, planning studies, bike/pedestrian projects, highway projects, etc. STBGDA funds are federal, and require a 20% match by the local jurisdiction. In 2015, the DCHC MPO instituted a formula system for delivery of STBGDA funds to the member jurisdictions. STBGDA funds are set aside for MPO planning activities, transit support, and bike/ped infrastructure. After that, the remaining funds are distributed by formula to each jurisdiction called "Local Discretionary" funds. In recent years, DCHC MPO has received a little under \$5M annually in STBGDA funds, with Chapel Hill receiving anywhere from \$200,000 to over \$300,000 annually, depending on the planning activities they will undertake that year. The Town has full discretion to spend those funds how it chooses, within Federal Highway Administration guidelines and DCHC MPO policy.*

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The DCHC MPO has had a longstanding policy of discouraging discretionary funds being used for highway projects, and trying to direct them to non-highway projects. In practice, this has meant these funds going to bicycle and pedestrian projects that each jurisdiction prioritizes. For Homestead Road, the Town originally directed \$428,750 of STBGDA funds to the project. During a call for projects in 2018, the Town directed an additional \$611,250 of STBGDA funds to this project. The DCHC MPO Board approved this funding on January 16, 2019.