

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2020 9:50 AM
To: Tab Combs
Cc: Judy Johnson; Becky McDonnell; Allen Buansi; Amy Ryan; Hongbin Gu; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Pam Hemminger; Tai Huynh; Amy Harvey; Carolyn Worsley; Catherine Lazorko; Flo Miller; Laura Selmer; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Maurice Jones; Rae Buckley; Ralph Karpinos; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver
Subject: RE: Mitigating motorist-vs-nonmotorist conflict on the proposed Fordham Blvd Sidepath

Thank you for your correspondence with the Town of Chapel Hill. The Mayor and Town Council are interested in what you have to say. By way of this email, I am forwarding your message to the Mayor and each of the Council Members, as well as to the appropriate staff person who may be able to assist in providing additional information or otherwise addressing your concerns.

If your email is related to a development application or a particular issue being addressed by the Council, your comments will be made part of the record. If applicable, we encourage you to attend any public meetings related to the items addressed in your email.

Again, thank you for your message.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Coffin



Jeanette Coffin
Office Assistant
[Town of Chapel Hill Manager's Office](#)
[405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.](#)
[Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#)
(o) 919-968-2743 | (f) 919-969-2063

From: Tab Combs [mailto:tab.combs@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 3:33 PM
To: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: Mitigating motorist-vs-nonmotorist conflict on the proposed Fordham Blvd Sidepath

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Dear Mayor Hemminger and Members of Council:

I am writing regarding the Fordham Boulevard sidepath agenda item on the Wednesday, Feb. 26 agenda. I have nearly two decades' experience planning and evaluating nonmotorized travel facilities.

I also live in Little Ridgefield, so have had ample opportunity to consider the proposed design in light of my knowledge of motorist travel behavior in the area of the sidepath. I believe the sidepath can be an integral part of a safe, convenient, efficient transportation facility, but only if the town takes additional measures to reduce the potential for high-speed conflicts between motorists and sidepath users.

My primary concern is with the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and other sidepath users at two conflict points: the sidepath's crossings of Ridgefield and Walnut. Motorists cross the proposed sidepath route as they turn off Fordham into the Little Ridgefield neighborhood at those two points, and they tend to do so distracted and at high speed. There is not enough space between the edge of Fordham and the edge of the sidepath for an entering motorist to see, recognize, and avoid a sidepath user in the act of crossing the side street. Even though motor vehicle traffic volumes entering the neighborhood at Ridgefield and Walnut are relatively low (town staff have counted ~45 vehicles per day entering at Ridgefield), those vehicles turn in quickly and create a dangerous if not deadly conflict for potential sidepath users.

I have previously written to explain why these conflict points present a potentially lethal hazard for sidepath users. I'm writing now to offer a way to mitigate these conflicts without changing the overall sidepath route, should Council vote against pursuing the shared-street option along Hickory Drive.

Short of installing traffic signals at Ridgefield and Walnut, the most obvious way to mitigate the motorist-vs-sidepath user conflict is to back the sidepath farther away from Fordham at the two side streets. This would ensure there is enough space for motorists entering the neighborhood to decelerate in time to avoid a potentially fatal collision with a sidepath user. However, there is currently not enough right-of-way to increase the gap between Fordham and the sidepath beyond 20 feet, which nonmotorized facility planning guidelines clearly state is insufficient for all but the slowest of roadways. Thus, this option would require acquisition of additional ROW, meaning it is likely unrealistic.

Alternatively, the Town could mitigate these conflicts by eliminating or disincentivizing the right turn off of Fordham into the neighborhood at Ridgefield and Walnut. For Ridgefield, the simplest way to do this is by making that intersection egress-only via a mountable traffic island, much like is present at Rogerson and Oakwood Drives where they connect with Raleigh Rd.

At Walnut, the egress-only option would also work, but it might be more palatable to instead allow ingress at Walnut but eliminate or calm left turns from eastbound Walnut onto northbound Hickory Dr. This is because the majority of the motor vehicle traffic that turns into the neighborhood at Walnut is commuters using Walnut-to-Hickory as a shortcut from Fordham to Willow, rather than proceeding north on Fordham to the stoplight to turn right Willow. Eliminating or calming the left turn at Walnut and Hickory would remove the incentive for high-speed cut through traffic without reducing connectivity or emergency vehicle access. There are a few strategies that could achieve this, including:

- A narrow raised median on Walnut, beginning at the western edge of Walnut's intersection with Hickory and extending westward—toward Fordham—2-3 car lengths. This would eliminate the left turn from eastbound Walnut to northbound Hickory for all but the most determined of motorists without restricting any other motor vehicle movements.
- A speed table or traffic circle at Walnut and Hickory. Neither of these options would eliminate the left turn but they would deter motorists who are seeking a high-speed shortcut up

to Walnut, thereby reducing the volume of high-speed motor vehicle traffic entering the neighborhood at Walnut.

If Town Council decides to move forward with this project, I strongly encourage you to request staff consider these changes at the two side street intersections in order to eliminate or reduce the potential for high speed motor vehicle vs. pedestrian or bicycle collisions.

Sincerely,

Tabitha Combs
418 Hickory Dr

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2020 9:50 AM
To: stephen whitlow
Cc: Judy Johnson; Becky McDonnell; Allen Buansi; Amy Ryan; Hongbin Gu; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Pam Hemminger; Tai Huynh; Amy Harvey; Carolyn Worsley; Catherine Lazorko; Flo Miller; Laura Selmer; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Maurice Jones; Rae Buckley; Ralph Karpinos; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver
Subject: RE: Fordham side path: in support of Option 1/2

Thank you for your correspondence with the Town of Chapel Hill. The Mayor and Town Council are interested in what you have to say. By way of this email, I am forwarding your message to the Mayor and each of the Council Members, as well as to the appropriate staff person who may be able to assist in providing additional information or otherwise addressing your concerns.

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Sincerely,

Jeanette Coffin



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[405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.](#)
[Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#)
(o) 919-968-2743 | (f) 919-969-2063

From: stephen whitlow [mailto:sbwhitlow@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 3:56 PM
To: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: Fordham side path: in support of Option 1/2

External email: Don't click links or attachments from unknown senders. To check or report forward to reportspam@townofchapelhill.org

Mayor Hemminger and Council Members,

Regarding the Fordham side-path, I encourage you to support Option 1/2. This is the most appropriate location for the path to promote walking and biking in and around the Blue Hill district.

I do not live in the Little Ridgefield neighborhood but my home backs up to Fordham Boulevard in a different area of town. I am not unsympathetic to the concerns of the Little Ridgefield neighbors regarding noise. I spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about strategies to muffle the noise in my backyard. That said, I believe the interests of those who would benefit from the shared path, especially those who have no choice but to walk or bike along Fordham, should be weighed more heavily than the interests of neighbors that may be temporarily inconvenienced by the removal of vegetation from the public right-of-way.

My understanding is that this project was planned in a transparent manner with ample input from community members and planning professionals. I was troubled to read in the staff report that a project that was vetted, funded, and actively being designed was stopped in its tracks. Climate change demands that we act quickly to reduce our reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and projects like the side path are an important piece of that critical work. By all means build a project that is safe and includes reasonable noise abatement steps, but please move the project forward quickly.

Thank you,
Stephen Whitlow

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Wednesday, March 04, 2020 1:16 PM
To: kstahl@pobox.com
Cc: Judy Johnson; Becky McDonnell; Allen Buansi; Amy Ryan; Hongbin Gu; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Pam Hemminger; Tai Huynh; Amy Harvey; Carolyn Worsley; Catherine Lazorko; Flo Miller; Laura Selmer; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Maurice Jones; Rae Buckley; Ralph Karpinos; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver
Subject: FW: Fordham Sidepath meeting agenda item for this Wednesday

Thank you for your correspondence with the Town of Chapel Hill. The Mayor and Town Council are interested in what you have to say. By way of this email, I am forwarding your message to the Mayor and each of the Council Members, as well as to the appropriate staff person who may be able to assist in providing additional information or otherwise addressing your concerns.

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[Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#)
(o) 919-968-2743 | (f) 919-969-2063

From: Kim Stahl [<mailto:kstahl@pobox.com>]
Sent: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:42 PM
To: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: Fordham Sidepath meeting agenda item for this Wednesday

External email: Don't click links or attachments from unknown senders. To check or report forward to reportspam@townofchapelhill.org

Mayor and Council,

I spoke to you last week about the opportunity for a win-win on the Sidepath project. We had some new information from town staff as well. First, I know that this isn't a decision you're taking lightly. I love being in a town where each Council member earnestly tries to find the best approach. Even when it isn't the approach I would take. It seems as if this choice is a foregone conclusion. If so, I'd like to speak to ways to make this less of a loss for the neighborhood and the town. But in case it's not a done deal, first please consider these factors.

The original sidepath design has a whole lot of issues. Some of them have made it into the narrative, but not effectively, and others not at all. You've already started to see them. The safety issue that was poo-pooed all along has turned out to be a real issue. Just taking the crossings down a few yards from Fordham eliminates the whole problem. The Fordham traffic issue is a problem that staff didn't catch. Also eliminated by moving the crossing to Hickory. Removing mature trees is a big issue. Stormwater. Noise. The construction to occur at University Place with no buffer for the neighborhood. The approach has been "don't worry about any of that, we'll figure it all out." But the original design will be a string of problems to resolve, and the resolutions are already twisting the knife (egress only our intersections with Fordham?!)

We were told last week that the replacement tree buffer would be just as good as the current one in five years, but how? We have a multi-story tree canopy now. At best it will be several decades to replace any part of that, five years doesn't make sense. We were told that they could remove just part of the buffer, but checking with an arborist who looked at the landscape plan, in reality the rest of the mature trees will be killed by cut roots and compaction, so the whole buffer will be lost. And of course replacement with anything comparable isn't feasible if the best half of the buffer space will be cement.

The stormwater issue hasn't been addressed at all. Back-filling much of the ditch and removing trees to add cement will add fast-moving water to Fordham and more flooding in the Estes extension. One way or another that will have to be resolved. The problem doesn't exist with a shared street.

Doing this project will mean that bikes won't get their dedicated lanes when Fordham is redeveloped. We foreclose that opportunity with this path. While the less-desireable multi-use path will abut Fordham, leaving pedestrians sweltering in exhaust fumes, heat, and 70-90dB of noise (or more until this new buffer grows up). Every part of that is flipped to a positive win with option 3.

Speaking to cost, we've been asking for more than a year for an estimate for construction of the path. We still haven't heard it. So this decision is being made in absence of any estimate of what it will take to remove trees, back-fill the ditch, build a path and a fence, and do any traffic and other mitigation required. Instead, the cost of a sidewalk on Hickory was presented. That sidewalk is a red-herring. It was added as option only 4 because Kimley-Horn couldn't find at a topo map to see whether Hickory had any steep elevation changes that would require a sidewalk. Hickory is flat as a pancake. No sidewalk is needed. Shared streets are meant to be shared with pedestrians. Instead the sidewalk option has been hijacked to make a shared street look expensive. A red herring. The cost of a shared street would be signs, paint, and maybe a couple of raised crosswalks or speed tables. It would be safe, inviting, and shaded, at next to no cost. We still have no estimate for the path to make any apples-to-apples comparison.

The town asked for feedback, and dozens of people came to a public meeting. Look at the raw data from that meeting. The vast majority of those people want the shared street. Not just "some people from the neighborhood" but people who walk and bike through there now, and others from the town who don't want to see mature trees removed. The neighborhood sent you a petition for option 3 that was out for a few days and not widely distributed, but of the 100 people who signed, almost half were Chapel Hill residents from outside the neighborhood.

As it was originally drawn, the path is a pile of problems. You haven't been presented with materials that outline those problems effectively, and you just started seeing them at the meeting last Wednesday. Alternative 3, combined with a Complete Street redevelopment of Fordham, is a cost-effective, safe way to achieve every goal I've heard anyone advance. Commuter dedicated bike lanes, a shady, safe place for everyone else, at low cost, and no loss of mature trees. If the choice is between wasting a ton of taxpayer money on a bad project that is a loss for every single stakeholder (even though some of them haven't realized that yet), or only *possibly* losing the grant and having to repave the existing stretch of path and put up some signs and paint at town expense (so

not much more than the match we've already committed) but as a win for every stakeholder...I vote for the win-win(win-win-win) represented by Option 3.

All of that, I expect, isn't going to change your decision at this point. You've been given reports aimed at the outcome of the original plan and some cheerful optimism about how great this path will be, and we've been tilting at windmills this whole time giving "feedback." I appreciate that you are all dedicated people trying your earnest best, so assuming this is what it is, I at least appreciate your determination to make it cause as little harm to the neighborhood as possible.

To do that, please take the effort in your decision on Wednesday to include meaningful mitigation rather than hoping it will happen as a matter of course in the project. Please *direct* that it be included in the project.

1. Instead of short bits of patchwork fence on homeowners' property, instead do one long, tall, continuous fence along the path. Maintain that fence with the path as part of the town's responsibility. And please have that built before the path. This is a win for homeowners and for the town for several reasons.

- A 6' fence would be shorter than many vehicles on Fordham, it wouldn't even block views of tall people on the path, let alone do much to mitigate road noise. Acoustifence comes in 6' sheets, consider a 12' fence, but please make it at least 8'.

- The tree buffer was just there. People didn't have to maintain it. Providing a replacement fence that individuals don't have to worry about is a meaningful gesture.

- Some people already have fences, and presumably if they wanted to accept the new AcoustiFence they would have to tear those down at their own expense if the replacement was constructed on their property. That puts an expensive burden on the homeowners, and would require complexity to connect the new fence with their side fencing, which probably won't match. A single fence along the path lets people leave their own fences up (giving a little more noise buffer) and costs them nothing to get the benefit.

- Some owners might be hard to get a hold of. This will be a costly bit of overhead for the town to manage getting all of the permissions needed to build all of the little sections of fence on each parcel of private property. Building a single fence as part of the project would be low-overhead, lower-cost, and lower liability for the town. It also removes the concern about the NCD restriction on fence height. Build it as high as possible!

- If any owners decline the fence, due to cost of removing their own or anything else (or don't respond, or just don't get the communication) leaving gaps, the effectiveness is diminished for all. If one house has fence, but one on either side of it does not, it's essentially useless for several houses around the gap. A complete fence would make for a more effective buffer, while a gap-filled stretch is no kind of buffer.

- Taking down an attractive stretch of trees is bad, but putting up a haphazard patchwork of fencing (potentially no better than what already exists) will be an eyesore for everyone on Fordham, on the path, and in the new buildings to be built across the street. Building a seamless continuous fence (which could presumably at some point have public art or at least be kept in good repair) will be a smart move for the town. Quite a few tourist eyeballs travel that stretch. A mural wouldn't be out of place. We know it will be at least five (or something) years before there is any meaningful buffer there, so an attractive fence will make a huge difference in this area of town we want to revitalize. The alternative is an ugly mess on our busiest thoroughfare.

2. Direct that the fence be built as soon as it can be done. Thanks to Council member Buansi for thinking to ask what order that would be done. The timing of this project may well coincide with some very loud development at University Place. You'll be doing these folks a favor by at least giving them that sound barrier.

3. Since another major use of the buffer is to filter the exhaust from Fordham. For the good of the folks using that path, and for the houses on Hickory, please ask them to make the new buffer as dense as it can possibly be.

4. Ask the staff to do tight project management. We've all seen sad "take down the trees, wait five months, mosey along building, wait five months, put up a fence, eventually plant some bushes" project management. Good project management can make this happen fast. Once they take down those trees the runoff

problem is going to get worse, and once they pave it will get a lot worse. So it's also in the best interest of the folks getting flooded in Estes Extension every time there's a heavy mist that the town get to the "landscaping" phase of this project asap. Since they'll have to backfill a lot of ditch, that water will also be running onto Fordham until some kind of mitigation happens. So the staff should have a lot of incentive to get this over with. But please emphasize the need to do it that way.

5. This whole proposal to block off Ridgefield and Walnut as "egress only" to make the neighborhood inaccessible, well, wow. Adding some traffic calming and "local traffic only" or "no through traffic" or "no right during rush hour" signs is one thing, but cutting us off completely from anywhere other than Willow is a horse of a different color. Please find another way. This project has a whole lot of "oh, that's a problem we hadn't considered, we'll have to find a way around it" issues ahead of it. Please direct that the project look for any possible alternative to harming Little Ridgefield more while working around those problems. (It's not too late to avoid them altogether with the shared street

I know that you have been put between a rock and a hard-place to make this choice. You don't have an easy job, and you are trying earnestly to do that job well. It was wonderful of several of you to take your time to come see the route firsthand. So I hope even though this decision is bad for the neighborhood, I appreciate that you've paid attention and have expressed a solid determination to mitigate the harm. Please explicitly build that mitigation into the project up front with clear direction to staff to make sure those mitigations don't get lost in the shuffle.

Thank you for reading and considering.

-Kim Stahl