

# 01-05-2022 Town Council Meeting

## Responses to Council Questions

### **ITEM #1: Provide Guidance on Options for Franklin Street Downtown**

**Council Question:**

Could we get a cost-sharing agreement with NCDOT in place to help pay for the major capital expenses associated with us taking over maintenance?

**Staff Response:**

*Town staff has only had preliminary conversations with NCDOT about the arrangement which have indicated that NCDOT would hand over all maintenance and the costs associated with “owning” the road.*

**Council Question:**

What is the timeline for executing the one-time upgrades?

**Staff Response:**

*The upgrades would be phased in over multiple years as budget allows. We would complete the necessary evaluation and fund the needed repairs within the next five years if possible.*

**Council Question:**

What are the pros and cons of the two bike lane options as it relates to ped and cyclist safety? Are there any impacts related to our local businesses?

**Staff Response:**

*Both bike lane options are advantageous for non-vehicular road users because vehicle speeds will naturally decrease due to less road width and the crossing distance for pedestrians is reduced. Below are advantages of each option specifically:*

- *Traffic running advantages:*
  - *Fewer conflicts with numerous driveways on W. Franklin St. and parking will be minimally affected*
  - *Bikes are more visible to buses and other road users because they are next to other moving traffic*
- *Traffic running drawbacks:*
  - *Bikes are not physically separated from moving vehicles*
- *Curb running advantages:*
  - *Bikes are physically separated from moving vehicles*
  - *Cars/buses/trucks cannot block the bike lane*
- *Curb running drawbacks:*

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- *On-street parking will be reduced: each driveway and intersection would need a longer clear zone to allow exiting vehicles to see past the parked cars that would be farther out in the road due to the location of the bike lane.*

**Council Question:**

How are we coordinating our vision for Franklin St with Rosemary St and how they'll interact?

**Staff Response:**

*Town staff have only been exploring petitions and changes to W. Franklin St. currently and will evaluate the entire downtown network once a direction is chosen.*

**Council Question:**

What does our Connectivity & Mobility Plan envision for Franklin St?

**Staff Response:**

*The Mobility and Connectivity Plan shows buffered/protected bike lanes on W. Franklin St.*

**Council Question:**

Is there any way in which we could get NCDOT to pay for all or some of the major capital expenses – stormwater and removing the crown – before the Town would take over maintenance, particularly since they will be saving nearly \$200,000 a year in maintenance costs?

**Staff Response:**

*Town staff has only had preliminary conversations with NCDOT about the arrangement, which have indicated that NCDOT would hand over all maintenance and associated costs. However, Town staff are hoping to explore the possibility of partnering with NCDOT – for example, the Town could pay for reducing the crown while NCDOT pays for the resurfacing next summer – assuming this aligns with Council's guidance and funding is available.*

**Council Question:**

Would the Town be assuming any other liabilities, such as responsibility for the consequences of accidents, by taking over maintenance?

**Staff Response:**

*Yes, the Town would assume all responsibility of the portion Franklin St. acquired from NCDOT.*

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**Council Question:**

If the Town is to pay for the above, what is the timeline for doing the work and incurring the costs?

**Staff Response:**

*The upgrades would be phased in over multiple years as budget allows. We would complete the necessary evaluation and fund the needed repairs within the next five years if possible.*

**Council Question:**

I believe that some Franklin St. merchants had concerns about curb running bike lanes. What are those concerns and what are the other challenges associated with these lanes?

**Staff Response:**

*Town staff is not aware of specific concerns but one drawback of curb running bike lanes is that such a design would reduce the number of on-street parking spaces. Each driveway and intersection, of which there are many along W. Franklin, would need a longer clear zone to allow exiting vehicles to see past the parked cars that would be farther out in the road due to the location of the bike lane.*

**Council Question:**

If we choose to change to curb running bike lanes, can we get all of the design work done in time to meet NCDOT's March deadline?

**Staff Response:**

*Town staff would need to re-engage our design consultant to complete this work but it is possible.*

**Council Question:**

Will the addition of the bike lanes on Franklin St. impact the bike lanes on Rosemary? I believe that there was some interest in closing the Rosemary lanes once the Franklin lanes were in place?

**Staff Response:**

*Town staff have only been exploring petitions and changes to W. Franklin St. currently and will evaluate the entire downtown network once a direction is chosen.*

**Council Question:**

Who is normally responsible for maintaining and repairing the stormwater infrastructure under Franklin Street – DOT? The Town? If it's DOT's responsibility now, and it's in poor condition,

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would we be able to negotiate a DOT contribution for all or some of the repairs as part of the transfer?

**Staff Response:**

*NCDOT is currently responsible for stormwater infrastructure on streets that it maintains, including Franklin St. Town staff has only had preliminary conversations with NCDOT about the proposed maintenance transfer. During those, NCDOT made it clear that they had no plans to make major stormwater repairs and would not contribute to repairs should the Town decide to takeover maintenance.*

**Council Question:**

The timeline for paving and re-stripping if we stick with DOT is clear. What is the timeline for changes if we take over from DOT?

**Staff Response:**

*The upgrades would be phased in over multiple years as budget allows. We would complete the necessary evaluation and fund the needed repairs within the next five years if possible.*

**Council Question:**

If we opted to stick with the traffic-running lanes, do we have an option to add bollards or other physical barrier between the bike lane and the parking spaces to provide an additional layer of safety for bikers?

**Staff Response:**

*We can explore this on parts of the street with no on street parking spaces but barriers would not be possible where there is on street parking because it would block access to the parking spaces.*

**Council Question:**

If we went with curb-running lanes, what is the impact on loading zones? Were there other concerns expressed by merchants about curb running?

**Staff Response:**

*Current loading zones (or future loading zones in current parking spaces) would be affected the same as if they were parking spaces. Town staff is not aware of specific concerns but one drawback of curb running bike lanes is that such a design would reduce the number of on-street parking spaces. Each driveway and intersection, of which there are many along W. Franklin, would need a longer clear zone to allow exiting vehicles to see past the parked cars that would be farther out in the road due to the location of the bike lane.*

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### **Council Question:**

When are/were the stormwater repair/updates due? Is there any possibility to have DOT pay for those updates AND have the Town take over the street, by delaying the takeover timeline, for instance?

### **Staff Response:**

*Franklin Street's stormwater infrastructure is aging and the Town is aware of multiple issues. Town staff believe repairs are overdue and needed within the next five years and would want to do them as soon as budget allows. NCDOT operates more reactively to this type of maintenance, acting only if there are problems. In preliminary conversations between Town staff and NCDOT, they have indicated that they would not pay for the stormwater upgrades prior to handing over the street.*

### **Council Question:**

How much more would it cost to take over Franklin to Deming? Will we be able to implement our mobility plan for this stretch without taking over the street?

### **Staff Response:**

*Staff would need time to do these calculations. The Mobility Plan shows a lane reallocation between Boundary St. and Deming Rd., which could potentially be accomplished without taking over that segment from NCDOT if the traffic analysis works out. Unfortunately, E. Franklin St. was resurfaced in the last few years, so the opportunity for cost savings by piggy-backing on that will not be available in the near future.*

### **Council Question:**

How do the proposed bike lane options fit into the Mobility and Connectivity Plan for bike lanes for East/West Franklin Street?

### **Staff Response:**

*The Mobility and Connectivity Plan shows buffered/protected bike lanes on W. Franklin St. between Merritt Mill Rd. and Columbia. E. Franklin St. shows buffered/protected bike lanes between Columbia and Estes Dr., with multiuse paths beginning on both sides at Boundary St. going east.*

### **Council Question:**

How do these options fit into discussions regarding Rosemary Street as a more designated loading zone and more biking structure on Franklin?

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**Staff Response:**

*Town staff has not yet considered changes to Rosemary Street but these could be discussed should Council desire moving forward with bike lanes on Franklin St.*

**Council Question:**

Will there be uninterrupted bike lane connectivity running from Merritt Mill towards East Franklin? What are the challenges?

**Staff Response:**

*The traffic running bike lane proposed by the Town and approved by NCDOT starts at approximately 140 W. Franklin St. and runs uninterrupted into and through downtown Carrboro. The Downtown Partnership has advocated for a loading zone in front of 201 W. Franklin St. which would interrupt the bike lane due to decreased width at that intersection. Challenges include variable road widths and turning radii for buses/trucks at the Columbia St. intersection.*