

Bergen Watterson

From: Donna Rubinoff <rubinoff@colorado.edu>
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 1:25 PM
To: Hongbin Gu; Bergen Watterson
Cc: Melissa McCullough; Town Council; Advisory Boards
Subject: Question about NS BRT and Aura project. (Cc to ESAB and CDC)

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Hello Hongbin and Bergen,

I'm writing as a resident of Chapel Hill and also in my capacity as Chapel Hill at-large member of the Orange County Climate Council.

I'm following the Aura project and it's raising some questions about its BRT interface. My concerns are also important to consider in other major developments, such as University Inn, University Mall, etc.

We have a [real opportunity to design these mixed-use projects to showcase their TOD/transit oriented development qualities](#)....more than the weak version we are being presented with currently. To do this, we need to carve out dedicated space designed to celebrate and ease the project interface with public transit, rather than making transit a tack-on, an after thought, a mere "bus stop". The public transit/land use interface must be a "thing" a "place," a "space," and it must be beautiful, not invisible. By designing a consistent and celebratory "user friendly" transit interface across multiple locations, this will help to build up the transit market, and achieve our climate goals of using dense development to reduce Vehicle Miles Travelled. Please note, I am not talking about designing pretty bus stops, I am talking about urban design.

1. I'm not sure if the BRT have separate outside lanes or a center lane configuration.... But either way, [can we really "punch up" the Aura adjacent interface with BRT stop](#) so that it's more than a "tacked on Bus Stop next to Aura." At this point, the developer has not even shown that interface in its designs.

- Ie, can we ask the Aura developers to link the project access directly to the BRT stop with some [enhanced "place-making"](#)The identity of the arrival departure zone at transit must take on a significant [symbolic landmark](#) quality:
 - o through its [circulation design \(with a strong human desire line from inside Aura to the BRT stop\)](#). At present, buildings block human circulation from transit stop into the neighborhood. There should be a strong pass through (ie buildings separated). The pass-through should be urban designed, landscaped, very pleasant. Animated store fronts on both sides. It could also have "Arrival/Departure" arches or canopy that make it a statement landmark. Clear to anyone arriving or departing that the BRT is located nearby.
 - o They could also design those BRT fronting [buildings with a curve](#) next to the pass through, a reference to welcoming open arms.
 - o [Move public space so that it links directly with the BRT stop](#) instead of being located randomly at the corner. Between the BRT stop and the Aura buildings there should be a vibrant public space with special paving, landscaping (especially shade trees and green infrastructure for cooling), seating, that interfaces with shops.

- o Strengthen location of commercial/coffee shops, with designated outdoor seating zones (perhaps surrounded by short walls) so they face the BRT and provide convenient waiting/browsing areas for riders. (This will boost the commercial market, which could be expanded here). They could also provide quick shop kiosks for snacks/water/etc. things travelers need.
- I can sit down with your urban designer to sketch this if needed.

2. If we can foreground the TOD qualities to make it a showcase for “Integrated transit/land use planning”, we may be able to justify a significant reduction in parking. This would go a long way to counteract the challenges of auto oriented congestion and also demonstrate our commitment to climate action.

3. The Aura issue also makes me realize I want to see more about the broader BRT system.

- Do you plan to extend it E/W or loop it so it goes through the other densification nodes? Thinking about a loop across Estes through Blue Hill, west on Weaver Dairy.
- Or at a minimum, if E/W BRT is not envisioned, are you planning to strengthen a CH Bus loop through those locations by naming/branding it, such as Boulder does with the Hop, Skip and Jump. These are 10-15 minute consistent bus lines. While Hop primarily serves the University community, the others are community wide service.
- The other locations would want to coordinate design with the transit stops so that there is a similar urban design quality, that will make it very easy for riders to identify the stops and become very comfortable with using them.

Happy to discuss any of these issues further,
Kind regards,
Donna

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