



## Legislation Text

File #: [22-0003], Version: 1

### Provide Guidance on Options for Franklin Street Downtown.

**Staff:**

Colleen Willger, Director  
Bergen Watterson, Transportation Planning Manager  
Sarah Poulton, Downtown Special Projects Manager

**Department:**

Planning  
Planning  
Manager's Office

**Overview:** Franklin Street is Chapel Hill's "Main Street", serving as the primary commercial and social hub of the Town. The road is maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and the segment downtown is currently a five-lane road with parallel parking on both sides for the majority of the corridor. Over the past few years, Town leadership and staff have explored various options for reconfiguring the road to better meet our goals and needs. NCDOT will resurface W. Franklin St. in the summer of 2022 and the Town has an opportunity to change the road.

In 2020, Town staff worked with a consultant and NCDOT and has a set of approved pavement marking plans showing a lane reallocation, converting a travel lane in each direction to a buffered bike lane, which was to be implemented in summer 2020. COVID-19 delayed the resurfacing and the Town installed the temporary in-road walkway to support businesses and provide additional space for people walking and rolling downtown. The walkway, especially on W. Franklin St., received positive feedback, causing Town leadership and staff to reconsider the approved plans for the lane reallocation. The resurfacing that was rescheduled to summer 2021 was delayed again due to a conflicting OWASA project, providing another year for the Town to decide what to do with Franklin St. In October 2021, the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership petitioned the Town Council to explore transferring downtown Franklin St. (Raleigh St. to Merritt Mill Rd.) maintenance from NCDOT to the Town.

**Recommendation(s):**

That the Council provide guidance on the options for Franklin Street Downtown.

**Decision Points:**

- Should the Town request a transfer of maintenance of Franklin St. between Raleigh St. and Merritt Mill Rd. from NCDOT?
- If so, what uses does the Town want to pursue and what should the public input process look like?
- If not, what design should we pursue for restriping in summer 2022?

**Key Issues:**

- The in-road walkway as it is implemented now cannot be made permanent
  - NCDOT will not allow it to remain
  - The crown of the street makes it non-ADA compliant
- The cost to the Town for one-time upgrades needed at some point after taking over maintenance of approximately one mile of Franklin St. between Raleigh St. and Merritt Mill Rd. is up to \$2.7million, including major stormwater system replacements.
  - The annual cost of maintaining the road would be approximately \$190,000.
- Town control of Franklin St. would allow more autonomy and allow better alignment of street

design and Town goals. Such goals include economic development and emphasizing the safety of vulnerable road users of the street.

- If the Town does not pursue the maintenance transfer:
  - Traffic-running bike lane design is already approved by NCDOT
  - Curb-running (parking protected) bike lane design requires additional funds and time to design and may not be approved by either NCDOT or Town staff.
  - Both designs would require approximately \$250,000 for traffic signal plans and adjustments, median redesign and reconstruction, and safety enhancements like green paint and flexible delineator posts.
- If NCDOT resurfaces the road, the deadline for any pavement marking changes is late March 2022.

**Fiscal Impact/Resources:** The fiscal impact depends on the guidance provided. Transferring maintenance of Franklin Street from NCDOT to the Town would result in costs associated with one-upgrades of approximately ~\$2.7million and an annual cost of \$190,000. The majority of the ~\$2.7million is not necessarily an immediate expense.

If the Town opts to proceed with a lane reallocation after NCDOT resurfacing, the cost would be ~\$250,000 plus any needs for alternate designs. There is no funding identified at this time.

**Where is this item in its process?**



**Attachments:**

- Staff Presentation
- Technical Memorandum

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**The Agenda will reflect the text below and/or the motion text will be used during the meeting.**

PRESENTER: Bergen Watterson, Transportation Planning Manager  
Sarah Poulton, Downtown Special Projects Manager

The purpose of this item is for the Council to provide feedback on the options for Franklin Street Downtown.