



## Legislation Text

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File #: [23-0016], Version: 1

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### **Consider Requesting a Highway Project Swap in the 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Plan.**

#### **Staff:**

Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Deputy Town Manager, Interim Planning Director  
Bergen Watterson, Transportation Planning Manager

#### **Department:**

Manager's Office  
Planning

**Overview:** The Town has an opportunity to request that the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) swap highway projects for inclusion in the 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Due to NCDOT budget issues, the draft 2024-2033 STIP contains fewer projects than expected, removing numerous projects that had been previously included in the 2020-2029 STIP. The process up until now has included only state priorities, and NCDOT is currently accepting input from local jurisdictions.

The 2020-2029 STIP included six highway projects in Chapel Hill, but the new draft 2024-2033 STIP only includes one project - widening/capacity improvements along NC 54 from Barbee Chapel Road to the US 15-501 interchange (U-5774B), at a projected cost of \$66.3 million. The Town can request to swapping out the NC 54 project for another eligible highway project, as long as those projects are of similar or lower cost to NCDOT. Staff recommends removing the NC 54 project and including widening/capacity improvements on US 15-501 between Ephesus Church Road and I-40 (U-5304F) in the STIP, at a projected cost of \$33.7 million. This recommendation is due to the higher concentration of recent and future recent development proposals in the area.

As noted in the attached staff memorandum, there are other eligible highway projects along US 15-501 that the Town could request be added to the 2024-2033 STIP as long as the total cost falls under \$73 million. but staff's recommendation is to only request the addition of the US 15-501 improvements between Ephesus Church Road and I-40 (U-5304F).



#### **Recommendation(s):**

That the Council adopt a resolution requesting that NCDOT include the widening/capacity improvements on US 15-501 from Ephesus Church Road to I-40 (U-5304F) and remove the NC 54 corridor improvement project (U-5774B) from the 2024-2033 STIP.

#### **Decision Points:**

- Does Council want to request that NCDOT remove the NC 54 improvements (U-5774B) and including the US 15-501 improvements between Ephesus Church Road and I-40 (U-5304F) in the 2024-2033 STIP?
- Does Council want to request that NCDOT include an additional eligible highway project along US 15-501 in the 2024-2033 STIP?

#### **Key Issues:**

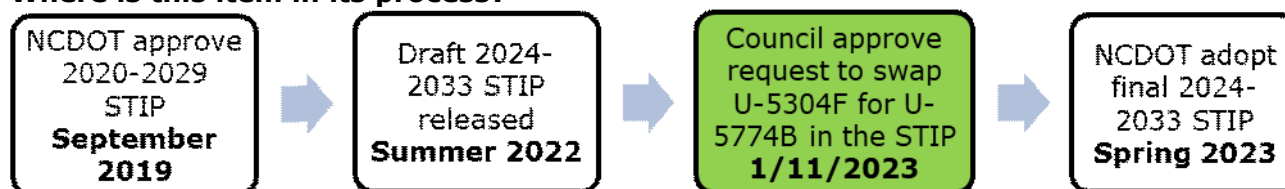
- The Town has received several major development proposals that, if approved, will require significant roadway improvements in the 15-501 North Focus Area of Town. Having a project in the

STIP would provide funding and some increased certainty that these improvements, which handle regional and state-wide traffic, could be implemented in a timely manner.

- Both US 15-501 and NC 54 are major commuting corridors that, if travel patterns remain the same, will see increasing congestion issues
- If the Town successfully requests removing the NC 54 improvements (U-5774B) from the 2024-2033 STIP, it would be removed from NCDOT's plans until at least 2028 when the next STIP is expected to be developed
- Requesting the swap does not guarantee that the US 15-501 capacity improvements (U-5304F) project will be funded or constructed
- The monetary value of the recommended swap would allow for the Town to request that NCDOT add one more eligible highway project, as long as that project falls under \$39 million.
- The swaps must be the same mode, so the Town cannot request swapping the NC 54 capacity improvements (U-5774B) for a transit or a bicycle-pedestrian project.

**Fiscal Impact/Resources:** There is no direct fiscal impact to the Town for major highway projects, as NCDOT will pay the full share of design, right-of-way, and construction. The decision would impact the amount that NCDOT plans to spend on highway improvements in Chapel Hill.

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



**Attachments:**

- Resolution
- Draft Staff Presentation
- Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board Recommendation
- Staff technical memorandum

**A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THAT THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SWAP U-5304F FOR U-5774B IN THE 2024-2033 STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2023-01-11/R-10)**

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) released the draft 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) in summer 2022; and

WHEREAS, the draft 2024-2033 STIP only includes some of the projects that were in the 2020-2029 STIP; and

WHEREAS, corridor improvements to NC 54 between US 15-501 and Barbee Chapel Road (U-5774B) is the only highway project in Chapel Hill that is in the 2024-2033 STIP; and

WHEREAS, NCDOT is providing an opportunity for local jurisdictions to swap eligible projects for other projects in the STIP; and

WHEREAS, five highway projects along the US 15-501 corridor between Manning Drive and I-40 were not included in the 2024-2033 STIP; and

WHEREAS, several major recent development proposals in the 15-501 North Focus Area of Town, if approved, will require significant transportation improvements; and

WHEREAS, including capacity improvements on US 15-501 between Ephesus Church Road and I-40 in the 2024-2033 STIP will make it possible that the roadway improvements are funded in the future, though not guaranteed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council requests that NCDOT swap the US 15-501 from Ephesus Church Road to I-40 capacity improvement project (U-5304F) for the NC 54 corridor improvement project (U-5774B) in the 2024-2033 STIP.

This the 11<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2023.

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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

RECOMMENDATION: That the Council requests that NCDOT include the US 15-501 from Ephesus Church Rd. to I-40 capacity improvement project (U-5304F) and remove the NC 54 corridor improvement project (U-5774B) from the 2024-2033 STIP.