



Legislation Text

File #: [23-0186], Version: 1

Support a Funding Request of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to Install a Protected High-Visibility Crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. at Critz Dr.

Staff:

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Department:

Planning
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Public Works

Overview: Three pedestrian fatalities and two serious injuries have occurred in the last five years on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. between Ashley Forest Rd. and Northfield Dr. After a fatality in 2018, Town staff requested safety improvements on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), which owns and maintains Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Staff's request resulted in a series of meetings and an agreement to explore installing a protected crosswalk with a pedestrian refuge island and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs, the flashing yellow lights) and an extended sidewalk to close a gap on the east side of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. NCDOT staff conducted a 24-hour pedestrian count in March 2018 and counted 123 pedestrians crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. between Ashley Forest Dr. and the driveway at 1200 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. outside of any marked crosswalk.

In early 2021 another pedestrian was fatally struck and NCDOT agreed to install temporary barrels on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. at Critz Dr. to emulate a crosswalk to determine impacts and gather feedback from residents. Most Windsor Circle residents, the neighborhood most directly impacted, did not support the crosswalk because it limited their ability to make a two-phase left turn (pulling into the center turn lane and then moving into a travel lane) out of the neighborhood. In May 2022, Town staff requested that NCDOT try another location for a crosswalk, and NCDOT installed the temporary barrels on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. at Ashley Forest Dr. to gauge impacts and resident support. Residents of Ashley Forest stated that the pedestrian island forced them to decelerate in the travel lane and they felt at risk of being hit from behind.

After the most recent fatality (December 2022) Town staff and NCDOT determined that a protected high-visibility crosswalk was imperative and that the only feasible location was just north of Critz Dr. This location was chosen over the Ashley Forest Dr. location because it presents an inconvenience (inability to make a two-phase left turn) rather than a dangerous condition (causing a rear-end crash due to decelerating in the travel lane). Other locations along the stretch of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. would block access or eliminate turning movements into and out of side streets or driveways.

Town staff held a public meeting on February 16, 2023 to speak with residents of Windsor Circle and other interested people about the impacts of the proposed change. Several residents of the neighborhood expressed concern about the difficulty turning out of the neighborhood, but everyone was supportive of the crosswalk and agreed that the risk of additional pedestrian fatalities outweighs the inconvenience of reduced options for turning left out of the neighborhood. If supported by Town Council, NCDOT Division 7 staff will submit a request to the State for Spot Safety funding at the end of March to implement the project.



Recommendation(s):

That the Council adopt the resolution supporting the NCDOT request for funding to install a protected high-visibility crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. at Critz Dr.

Key Issues:

- The Town adopted a Vision Zero policy in 2021 stating that no loss of life on Chapel Hill streets is acceptable.
- Three fatalities and two serious injuries have occurred along approximately 750 feet of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. between early 2018 and late 2022.
- All the crash victims have been low-income or unhoused residents living near the corridor.
- The only marked and signalized crosswalk in the area is at Northfield Dr., more than 400 feet north of Critz Dr. Pedestrian access to that crosswalk is difficult due to incomplete sidewalk along the east side of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
- During a 24-hour count in March 2018, 123 pedestrians crossed Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. between Ashley Forest Dr. and the driveway at 1200 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., outside of any marked crosswalk.
- The NCDOT funding request would include a sidewalk extension to connect the new crosswalk up to Taylor St.

Fiscal Impact/Resources: Staff anticipates that NCDOT will cover all expenses related to the crosswalk installation if it receives the Spot Safety funding. If Spot Safety funding cannot be secured, Town staff will explore other funding options for the important project. While not yet designed, staff estimate the project will cost approximately \$200,000.

Where is this item in its process?



Attachments:

- Resolution
- Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board Recommendation

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FUNDING REQUEST TO INSTALL A PROTECTED HIGH-VISIBILITY CROSSWALK ON MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD. AT CRITZ DR. (2023-03-08/R-3)

WHEREAS, three pedestrian fatalities and two serious pedestrian injuries have occurred on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. between Ashley Forest Dr. and Northfield Dr. in the last five years; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Chapel Hill's Vision Zero policy states that no loss of life on Chapel Hill streets is acceptable; and

WHEREAS, providing safe, accessible, and convenient infrastructure for all modes of transportation supports the Town's commitment to equity and support the adopted Complete Community framework; and

WHEREAS, seniors, children, people of color, people with disabilities, people in low-income communities, and vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and bicyclists face a disproportionate risk of traffic injuries and fatalities; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. is a state-owned road; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) will submit a request for Spot Safety funding to address this safety issue.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council supports the NCDOT request for funding to install a protected high-visibility crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. at Critz Dr.

This the 8th day of March, 2023.

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

By adopting the resolution, the Council supports the NCDOT request for funding to install a protected high-visibility crosswalk on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. at Critz Dr.