

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. D(3)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: October 1, 2002

TITLE: 2025 Regional Transportation Plan Update

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___ NO __ X__
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Proposed 2025 Transportation Network C. Current Local Bus Network D. Proposed 2025 Local Bus Network E. Proposed 2025 Fixed Guideway Routes F. Volume-Capacity Highway Map G. Connector Roads Plan H. TAB Recommendation	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale McKeel – 918-7329

PURPOSE

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization is currently updating the long-range transportation plan for the region. This memorandum provides a review of the status of the 2025 Transportation Plan. The Board of Aldermen is asked to review and comment on the 2025 transportation plan. A report has been prepared. A resolution for the Board’s adoption has been prepared (Attachment A).

INFORMATION

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) includes representatives from Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, Durham, Orange County, Durham County, Chatham County, and the N.C. Board of Transportation.

One of the primary functions of the DCHC MPO is to create a long-range transportation plan every three years, as required by federal transportation and air quality regulations. The current long-range plan was adopted in January 2000. A new long-range plan, the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan, is being developed.

The 2025 Plan will include all road, transit, bicycle and pedestrian projects that are expected to be completed through 2025, and a financial plan indicating how these projects will be funded. The 2025 Plan will be used to help identify projects for future state and local Transportation Improvement Programs. The 2025 Plan must also meet federal air quality standards under the Clean Air Act.

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is the policy-making body overseeing the development of the 2025 Plan. This TAC is made up of elected officials from the region, including a representative from Carrboro (Alderman Alex Zaffron).

Once adopted, the final draft Plan will be analyzed by State and federal agencies for compliance with federal clean air standards. The federal air quality conformity regulations require that the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Urban Area adopt a final Plan meeting all federal air quality standards by February 28, 2003. Failure to adopt a Plan by that time may result in a cut-off of federal transportation funding for new projects in the region. It is anticipated that the TAC will adopt a final Plan in March or April 2003.

In recent months, the DCHC MPO has been evaluating five Tier 3 alternatives (A through E). The five alternatives contain different combinations of transit and highway projects. All alternatives were evaluated using the Triangle Regional Transportation Model. The Triangle Regional Model projects future travel demand for the region using land use projections for 2025. All alternatives used the same projections of 2025 employment and housing patterns.

At its meeting on September 18, the TAC adopted Alternative C, with additional highway improvements, as the recommended alternative for the 2025 Plan. On October 23, the TAC is scheduled to adopt a draft 2025 Plan for a 45-day public comment period. The TAC is scheduled to adopt a final draft Plan in December 2002.

Note that the selection of the recommended alternative has been a lengthy process. This item had been tentatively scheduled for presentation to the Board of Aldermen earlier, but this was not possible.

The Transportation Board reviewed the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan on September 19, 2002. A copy of their recommendations is Attachment H.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RECOMMENDED 2025 PLAN

The 2025 Plan recommended by the TAC on September 18 has the following components:

- An extensive list of highway additions and modifications (see Attachment B).
- Phase I TTA rail system between Raleigh and Durham with a connection to RDU Airport.
- An intensive local bus network in Chapel Hill and Carrboro (see Attachment C) with additional park and ride lots in Orange and Chatham counties.
- High occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes along I-40 from NC 86 to the Johnston County/Wake County line.
- Three additional fixed guideway systems: (1) from the UNC campus through downtown Carrboro to the Horace Williams property, (2) between Chapel Hill and Durham along NC 54 and US 15-501, and (3) between Chapel Hill and Research Triangle Park along NC 54 (see Attachment D).
- High capacity transit services: (1) along US 15-501/Franklin Street from I-40 to the Carrboro Town limits, (2) along NC 86/Columbia St. between I-40 and Southern Village, and (3) between the Gateway Station (near the intersection of I-40 and US 15-501) and the Horace Williams property (see Attachment D).

- Bikelanes along principal transportation corridors and an extensive system of sidewalks.
- A transportation demand management program that includes carpool, vanpool, and telecommute programs, along with alternative work hour programs with compressed work weeks, staggered work hours and flextime, and parking fees in some areas.

Attachment E shows the volume to capacity ratio for the highway network in Alternative C. The colors provide an indication of expected highway congestion in 2025. Blue or green lines indicate that a road is expected to be under capacity in 2025, while yellow and red indicate roads that are anticipated to be over capacity.

KEY FINDINGS

Below are key findings in recommended 2025 Plan for the Carrboro area transportation network:

- Congestion along specific corridors is projected, including portions of Smith Level Road, Greensboro Street, Estes Drive, and NC 54 Bypass.
- The regional road network does not include the several projects that are part of the Town of Carrboro's connector roads plan, including the Seawell Connector, the connector between Lake Hogan Farm Road and Homestead Road, and the extensions of Pathway Drive, Tripp Farm Road, and Lake Hogan Farm Road (see Attachment E)
- Despite many improvements, the regional model's ability to assess transit impacts is limited, particularly in light of the unique local conditions in Chapel Hill and Carrboro.
- It is anticipated that there may be mistakes in the coding of the transit network in the model that results in the under assessment of transit impacts in 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the attached resolution providing recommendations on the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan to the Transportation Advisory Committee. The Mayor and the Board of Aldermen may wish to have additional time to review this information and consider adoption of the resolution at the October 15, 2002 meeting. It is suggested that the recommendations be provided to the TAC prior to the TAC's next meeting on October 23.