

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. E(3)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: March 25, 2003

TITLE: Report on Pedestrian Friendliness of Signalized Intersections and Other Pedestrian Access Issues

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___ NO __ X ___
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Request for Sidewalk on Jones Ferry Road	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale McKeel – 918-7329

PURPOSE

The 2003 Action Agenda includes a report on (1) pedestrian access to shopping and (2) the pedestrian friendliness of signalized intersections in Carrboro. A report has been prepared. A resolution that accepts the report is recommended for the Board's adoption.

INFORMATION

For several years the Board of Aldermen has identified the need for improvements in pedestrian access and safety near the Town's two shopping centers, Carrboro Plaza and Willow Creek, and at other locations. In addition, the Board of Aldermen has requested that town staff review signalized intersections and assess the visibility and friendliness of operation for pedestrians.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO SHOPPING

1. Access to Willow Creek Shopping Center. Willow Creek Shopping Center is located near the intersection of NC 54 Bypass and Jones Ferry Road. The following items are related to improving pedestrian access to this center:
 - In response to a request from the Town, NCDOT recently provided a painted crosswalk on Jones Ferry Road at the signalized intersection near the shopping center.
 - The Town has received enhancement funding from NCDOT to construct a sidewalk on the north side of Jones Ferry Road. This sidewalk will connect the Morningstar Mini-Storage site and the traffic signal at the entrance to shopping center, with an underpass of NC 54 Bypass.
 - The Town has received enhancement funding from NCDOT to construct a sidewalk on the east side of Old Fayetteville Road. This sidewalk will connect Autumn Woods

Apartments to the Jones Ferry Road intersection and improve access in the vicinity of the shopping center.

- The Town has received a request from the Orange County Community Advisory Committee for Adult Care Homes to construct a sidewalk connecting the Jones Ferry-Old Fayetteville intersection to the sidewalk recently constructed in front of the Willow Springs Office Building (Attachment B). Town staff is researching the cost of this sidewalk and possible funding sources.
2. Access to Carrboro Plaza Shopping Center. Carrboro Plaza is located near the intersection of NC 54 Bypass and Main Street. The following items are related to improving pedestrian access to this center:
- In response to a request from the Town, NCDOT has provided a pedestrian crosswalk and pedestrian signals on NC 54 at Main Street.
 - In April 2001, Town staff requested that NCDOT provide a longer pedestrian signal cycle to provide a longer crossing time. It does not appear that this change has been made and Town staff has contacted NCDOT again regarding this request.
 - In April 2001, Town staff requested that a crosswalk be provided across W. Main Street near the intersection with NC 54. This crosswalk has not been provided and Town staff has contacted NCDOT again regarding this request.
 - The Town has received enhancement funding from NCDOT to construct a sidewalk on the east side of Old Fayetteville Road. This sidewalk will connect Carolina Spring and Arbor Meadows Apartments to Carrboro Plaza.
3. Crosswalk on Jones Ferry Road at Davie Road. Town staff has requested that NCDOT study whether a crosswalk should be installed across Jones Ferry Road at Davie Road near the Abbey Court Apartments and the Pantry convenience store. In May 2002, NCDOT stated that they do not recommend a crosswalk at this location and provided the following response:

There is a vertical curve on Jones Ferry Road to the east of Davie Street that creates a sight distance problem when traveling westbound on Jones Ferry Road approaching Davie Street. Pedestrians viewed at this location were crossing at the top of the crest and being very cautious while crossing. A marked crosswalk may provide a false sense of security and thus they tend to cross the road less carefully. For these reasons, we do not recommend a marked crosswalk at this location. There are advance pedestrian crossing warning signs on Jones Ferry Road approaching Davie Road from the east and west.

Due to the width of Jones Ferry Road, vehicle speeds, and the level of pedestrian activity, Town staff continues to be concerned about pedestrian safety in this area, and will continue to explore with NCDOT staff additional measures for improving safety.

4. Crosswalk on S. Greensboro Street at Roberson Street. Town staff has requested that NCDOT study whether a crosswalk should be installed across S. Greensboro Street near Roberson Street and the Town parking lot. NCDOT has verbally stated that they do not recommend a crosswalk at this location, citing concerns similar to those given for the Jones Ferry-Davie request.

Although the speed limit on S. Greensboro Street in this area is 20 mph, speeds well in excess of 20 mph are common. It has been stated that the Town parking lot in this area is not used as extensively as would be expected due to the difficulty in crossing S. Greensboro Street. Town staff continues to be concerned about pedestrian safety in this area, and plan to discuss with NCDOT staff additional measures for improving safety. In addition, a crosswalk and other pedestrian improvements in this location will be analyzed as part of the downtown transportation study.

PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLINESS OF SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS

1. Downtown Vision and Transportation Study. The *Downtown Carrboro: New Vision* document includes several general recommendations for improving the pedestrian friendliness of signalized intersections in Carrboro's downtown. Among these recommendations are the following:

- Signalized intersections should provide adequate time for pedestrians to cross and should not require a pedestrian to push the button for a walk interval in the downtown core.
- Eliminate free-flow moves at intersections with turning conflicts between drivers and pedestrians.
- Replace pedestrian push button controls with automatic walk intervals; maintain minimum pedestrian wait cycles during off peak hours.
- Evaluate signal timing to determine whether progression supports 20-mph speed limit and adjust as needed.
- Use bright international (ladder-style or Sacramento-style) crosswalk markings. Higher speeds call for added material and contrast.
- Inventory traffic signage to determine whether unnecessary duplications can be removed and signs organized into a more orderly format.

Town staff generally concurs with the recommendations of the *Vision* report. Independent of the *Vision* report, Town staff has received several requests from citizens to eliminate the pedestrian push button controls in the downtown, and it appears that many downtown pedestrians choose not to use these controls.

In the short term, Town staff has requested that NCDOT study a prohibition on the use of right turn on red at several downtown intersections where currently allowed, as a means of reducing conflicts between drivers and pedestrians.

In the longer term, staff suggests that the *Vision* recommendations be analyzed as part of the downtown transportation study. As discussed previously, the Town's requests for funding the study have been approved, and a discussion of the scope and components of the transportation study is scheduled for a Board of Aldermen meeting in April.

One intersection that merits special focus as part of the transportation study is the Merritt Mill-Brewer Lane-Main-Franklin intersection. Safety concerns at this intersection include the lack of stop bars, crosswalks, understandable pavement markings and signage, and pedestrian infrastructure. The intersection is confusing for both motorists and pedestrians.

2. Replacement Signal at the Rosemary-Main intersection. In response to a request from the Town, NCDOT has installed a replacement signal at the intersection of Rosemary and Main streets, which should be in operation by the end of March. The primary reason for requesting the replacement was to improve pedestrian access across these streets. Pedestrian crosswalks and signals are being provided, and the Town's Public Works Department is making improvements to sidewalks and wheelchair ramps as weather permits. When the new signal goes into operation, the free-flow right turn will be eliminated, as recommended by the *Vision* report.
3. New Signal at the Lloyd-Main intersection. In response to the Town's request, NCDOT has also installed a new signal at the intersection of Lloyd and Main streets. The new signal has greatly improved pedestrian access across Main Street in this area. Pedestrian crosswalks, pedestrian signals, wheelchair ramps, and other sidewalk improvements have been made by the Town's Public Works Department as part of the signal installation.
4. New Signal at the Hillsborough-Old Fayetteville intersection. As part of the Hillsborough Road construction project, NCDOT has installed a new signal at the intersection of Hillsborough Road and Old Fayetteville Road. Initially, the intersection design did not include pedestrian crosswalks or pedestrian signals, and the Town was alerted to this by residents of the Sunset Creek neighborhood (which is now in the walk zone for McDougle Elementary and Middle schools). In response to a request from the Town, NCDOT has provided a crosswalk, relocated the wheelchair ramps, and agreed to install pedestrian signals in the near future.
5. New Signal at the Poplar-NC 54 Bypass intersection. In response to the Town's request, NCDOT is planning to install a new signal at the intersection of Poplar Street and NC 54 Bypass. There was a pedestrian fatality at this intersection in 2001. New turn lanes on NC 54 have already been constructed, and pedestrian crosswalks and pedestrian signals will be provided when the signal is installed. In response to a request from the Town, NCDOT has agreed to relocate the crosswalk to improve sight distance and shorten the crossing length. Town staff has reviewed the proposed signal timing and it appears to provide adequate time for elderly pedestrians to cross NC 54. It is anticipated that the signal will be installed by July of this year.
6. Pedestrian Signals at the Smith Level-FPG Elementary-Public Works intersection. In response to a request from the Town, NCDOT in January 2000 agreed to install pedestrian

signals at the intersection of Smith Level Road with the driveways to Frank Porter Graham Elementary and the Carrboro Public Works site. However, funding was not available for this installation in 2000 and the pedestrian signals have not yet been installed. Town staff has contacted NCDOT to review the status of this project. In conjunction with the installation of pedestrian signals, crosswalks would also be added.

7. Merritt Mill-Cameron Intersection. This is a T-intersection that is adjacent to the Libba Cotton Bikeway and railroad crossing. There are sidewalk facilities, pedestrian signals, and clearly designated crosswalks. However, there is currently not signage to caution motorists to be aware of pedestrians and bicycles. Town staff has contacted NCDOT and the Town of Chapel Hill regarding the installation of advance warning signs.
8. Jones Ferry-Old Fayetteville Intersection. When the proposed sidewalk on the east side of Old Fayetteville Road from the Autumn Woods Apartments to Jones Ferry Road is completed (discussed above), additional pedestrian safety measures such as pedestrian signal, signage, and crosswalks will be needed.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution (Attachment A) receiving this report.