

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. D(3)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: MARCH 7, 2006

TITLE: Connector Roads Policy – Lloyd Street and North Greensboro Street Area

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___NO__X__
ATTACHMENTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. ResolutionB. Minutes of January 17 Board of Aldermen WorksessionC. Vicinity MapD. Map of Possible AlternativesE. Handout on Street ConnectivityF. Carrboro Connector Roads PolicyG. Street Connectivity TimelineH. Action Plan for Traffic Circulation StudyI. Downtown Traffic Circulation Study	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale McKeel – 918-7329 Patricia McGuire – 918-7327

PURPOSE

On January 17th, the Board of Aldermen held a worksession on connectivity between Lloyd Street and N. Greensboro Street. Due to absences that night and the Board vacancy, it was decided to continue the worksession at a later meeting. Staff recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution receiving the report and provide guidance on next steps

INFORMATION

At its meeting on June 14, 2005, the Board of Aldermen received a report on the Downtown Traffic Circulation Study (Attachment H). One of the recommendations discussed a connecting street between Lloyd Street and Greensboro Street. The text of this recommendation is as follows:

Hosiery Street Extension — The Town should initiate community meetings to sketch ideas and parameters under which Hosiery Street or a parallel alignment could be extended across the railroad mainline and use the right-of-way of the old rail spur linking to Greensboro Street. At Greensboro Street, the driveway to Fitch Lumber would be reconstructed to align with the new street along the rail tracks and the adjacent Harris Teeter driveway would be closed on Greensboro Street and relocated to the new street extension. An alternate alignment would traverse the field immediately south of the existing inbound driveway serving the Carrboro Community Health Center. On the west side of the railroad tracks, the right-of-way is roughly 25 feet wide which is sufficient to provide a two-lane two-way street. The street could be used by locals as an alternative to Main and Weaver Streets. The new connection also could enhance business for Harris

Teeter so consideration should be given by the Harris Teeter property owner to permit a sidewalk easement on the south side of the new street. The benefit of such a street connection would be local accessibility across the railroad tracks saving local citizens time as they avoid peak hour congestion on Main, Weaver and Greensboro Streets. It would also enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists who may currently cross the tracks without the benefit of a formalized crossing. Traffic calming features can be integrated into the design of this street connection to ensure reasonable travel speeds that may discourage usage by “through” traffic.

On October 11, 2005, an action plan was presented to Board of Aldermen (Attachment G). The action plan discusses the status of work to date on the study recommendations and next steps. One of the next steps is to hold a worksession on connectivity between Lloyd Street and North Greensboro Street and consider for inclusion in the Connector Roads Policy.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

A connecting street between Lloyd Street and North Greensboro Street has been studied and discussed several times over the past 25 years. Much of this discussion focused on the extension of an existing street, Parker Street, from North Greensboro Street to Lloyd Street. However, with the construction of the Piedmont Health Service building in the mid-1990s, the extension of Parker Street to Lloyd Street was no longer feasible. A summary of the discussion of a connection between Lloyd and Greensboro Street follows:

1. 1983 Discussions. In 1983, the Parker Street extension was explored as part of the Connector Roads Plan. Later in the year, the Parker Street extension was again discussed as part of the Hammer Siler George report on Downtown Revitalization Strategies, which stated that the extension was needed to support the proposed Corporate Town zoning concept. Corporate Town zoning was later adopted but the Parker Street extension was not implemented.
2. 1985 NCDOT Study. In 1985, the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) conducted a traffic operation study of downtown Carrboro. This study evaluated the Parker Street extension. The study stated, “Presently, we do not have sufficient information to make a specific recommendation on the extension of Parker Street, but most likely such construction will provide another access for residents of Lloyd Street to the northwest side of Town. However, this connector should greatly be considered in terms of the additional impact that may be directed from Greensboro Street to the intersection of Lloyd Street and East Main Street.”
3. 1989 Downtown Circulation Plan. The 1989 Downtown Circulation Plan proposed changes to the circulation system in downtown Carrboro and included the Parker Street extension. A public hearing was held on the Downtown Circulation Plan on September 12, 1989. No one spoke specifically against the Parker Street extension. The Board approved a motion that the improvements to Parker Street be deleted from the plan and also voted to table the entire plan.
4. 1992 Discussion. On June 16, 1992, the Board of Aldermen discussed alternatives for connecting Lloyd Street and North Greensboro Street. The staff report reviewed four detailed alternatives: (1) Parker Street Extension, (2) a street utilizing the Railroad Spur, (3) the

extension of Willard Street, and (4) Parker and Willard One-Way Pairs. Following the discussion, it was the consensus of the Board not to take any action on the matter.

5. 1995 Discussion. The Board of Aldermen at its 1995 Agenda Retreat requested a staff review of possible connectors between Lloyd and Greensboro streets. On April 4, 1995, the Board of Aldermen reviewed two alternatives, the Railroad Spur and extension of Willard Street. The Board of Aldermen voted to request NCDOT and the NCDOT Bicycle Program to prepare a plan for connecting Lloyd and Greensboro streets, excluding Willard Street as an alternative. The NCDOT responded in a letter that “due to our lack of expertise in performing these type analyses, the [NCDOT] Municipal Traffic Engineering Assistance Program will be unable to assist the Town of Carrboro with this request” and a plan was not prepared.
6. Connection to Estes Drive. In addition to connections between Lloyd and Greensboro streets, there have also been discussion of connections between Lloyd Street and Estes Drive. The 1989 Downtown Circulation Plan proposed the extension of Lloyd Street across the railroad tracks to Crest Street and continuing on to connect with Estes Drive at the point where Hillview Street currently connects. The 1989 plan was tabled by the Board of Aldermen and this connection was not pursued.

ANALYSIS AND ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Traffic counts in February 2004 recorded nearly 2200 vehicles per day on Lloyd Street near the intersection with Main Street. A connector road between Lloyd and Greensboro streets could have many of the potential benefits and negative effects of connectivity that are discussed in the Handout on Street Connectivity (Attachment D).

Perhaps the biggest benefits of a connecting street would be the provision of an additional access for emergency vehicles to the Lloyd-Broad neighborhood and an alternative route for bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles. Perhaps the biggest negative impacts would be increased traffic in the Lloyd-Broad neighborhood, which could be offset somewhat by traffic calming measures, and the possible reduction in development potential of some properties due to the requirement that a connector road be built across the property.

Town staff has reviewed possible connecting streets between Greensboro Street and Lloyd Street that could be added to the Connector Roads Plan. Please note that there has not been an exhaustive effort to analyze the cost or impacts of any of these alternatives, nor is there a “line on a map” indicating a location. Several alternatives are shown on Attachment C and are discussed below:

1. A connecting street in the vicinity of the Willard Street alternative that was discussed in 1992 and 1994. This connecting street would be located south of the Cedar Court condominiums on N. Greensboro Street. Depending on final alignment, this alternative might impact a Fitch Lumber Company storage area and residences on the Greensboro Street side of the tracks. Near Lloyd Street, there is currently parking for the Piedmont Health Service building that might be affected by the connecting street.
2. A connecting street using the Hosiery Street and Railroad Spur as discussed in the Downtown Circulation Study. This alternative would likely cross a portion of the Carr Mill Mall site and

may require that a new spur line be built to serve Fitch Lumber Company. The Town of Carrboro has received a development application for property located directly north of Hosiery Street on Lloyd Street.

3. A connecting street between Lloyd Street and Mulberry Street. This alternative would not provide a direct connection between Lloyd and Greensboro Streets but would provide a connection via two residential streets, Mulberry Street and Pleasant Drive. It appears that the Town owns much of the right-of-way needed to make this connection but the topography may make such a crossing difficult and expensive.

An important question with any of the alternatives is whether an at-grade crossing of the railroad would be approved by Norfolk-Southern. In general, both Norfolk-Southern and the NCDOT Rail Division are seeking to reduce the number of at-grade crossings of railroads. In other municipalities, Norfolk-Southern has requested that one or more rail crossings be closed as a condition of approving a new rail crossing. If an at-grade crossing cannot be approved, the follow-up question is whether it is feasible to cross over or under the railroad.

As an alternative or as an addition to a vehicular connection, the Board may wish to consider connections to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections between Lloyd and Greensboro streets. For example, there is currently an informal pedestrian crossing of the railroad tracks near Hosiery Street behind Harris Teeter. The Town may wish to seek NCDOT and/or MPO funds to improve the safety and accessibility of this and other crossings.

If any of the alternatives is added to the connector roads plan, the land use ordinance at Sections 15-220(h) and 15-221(b) would require that the connector road be built as part of future development or redevelopment. Unlike the location of most other future connector roads in Carrboro, there is existing development on some of the properties where a Lloyd-Greensboro connecting road might be built. Due to this existing development, it could be many years before the plan for a connecting road could be implemented, although portions of the connector could possibly be built as properties are developed or redeveloped.

If the Board is interested in pursuing one or more of the alternatives discussed in the report, the next step would be for Town staff to discuss the proposed crossing locations with Norfolk-Southern and the NCDOT Rail Division. The Board may also wish to schedule a community meeting and other opportunities for public comment on the alternatives for connectivity between Lloyd Street and Greensboro Street. Please note that due to the preliminary nature of this worksession in a process that has many steps, there was not an effort to notify property owners who would possibly be affected by these alternatives.

FISCAL IMPACT

Acceptance of the report carries with it no known fiscal impacts.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution receiving the report and provide guidance on next steps (Attachment A).