

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. D(1)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT MEETING DATE: AUGUST 15, 2006

TITLE: Conceptual Plan for Chapel Hill's Portion of the Morgan Creek Trail

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___NO__X__
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Report of the Morgan Creek Trail Conceptual Plan Committee	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale McKeel – 918-7329

PURPOSE

On June 26, the Chapel Hill Town Council referred the report of the Morgan Creek Trail Conceptual Plan Committee to the Town of Carrboro for review and comments. Bill Webster of the Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department will make a presentation. Staff recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution receiving the report and provide comments.

INFORMATION

For several years the Town of Chapel Hill has been working on a conceptual design for a trail along Morgan Creek. A short section of the proposed trail is in the Town of Carrboro. The 10-foot paved trail would begin near the intersection of Culbreth Road and US 15-501 and terminate at Smith Level Road near the Carrboro Public Works Facility. The trail would likely require several bridges and underpasses. The project would also provide access to the Merritt Pasture and a connection to the existing Fan Branch Trail, which serves Southern Village and in the future will extend to the proposed Southern Community Park.

The following has occurred or is ongoing:

- The N.C Department of Transportation has funded a conceptual plan study for the Morgan Creek Trail from Merritt Pasture to Smith Level Road. A citizen Committee started work in November 2002. Staff from Carrboro's Recreation and Parks Department and Planning Department have been involved in meetings of the committee and provided feedback as needed.
- A public forum was held on June 10, 2003 at Frank Porter Graham School. Approximately 15 people spoke. All were in favor of the project.
- The Committee recessed in June 2004 pending the results of flood analysis of key bridge locations.
- In January 2006, the State announced it had completed the Morgan Creek flood study. The Committee came out of recess and completed its recommended conceptual plan (Attachment B).

- The conceptual plan was presented to the Chapel Hill Town Council in June 2006. The Council referred the report to various boards and agencies. Council action may occur on October 9, 2006

If the Chapel Hill Town Council decides to proceed with the Morgan Creek trail project, the next steps would be to (1) complete a detailed design based on the approved conceptual plan, (2) complete land acquisition and easements, and (3) develop detailed cost estimates and identify a feasible Phase 1 project.

The short section of trail in the Town of Carrboro is discussed on page 10 and illustrated on page 14 of the conceptual plan. The conceptual plan envisions the trail passing under the Smith Level Road bridge (on the north side of Morgan Creek) and then looping up to the existing sidewalk on Smith Level Road on land owned by the Town of Carrboro. The report also suggests that the Town of Carrboro build a 1200-foot section of sidewalk on the west side of Smith Level Road to connect the Berryhill neighborhood to the existing sidewalk on the Morgan Creek bridge. This sidewalk would provide access for residents of Berryhill to the trail and Frank Porter Graham Elementary School. It has long been anticipated that this sidewalk would be built by NCDOT as part of the Smith Level Road TIP project (with a local match from the Town of Carrboro).

Please note that on February 14, 2006 the Board of Aldermen appointed members to a Morgan Creek Trail Planning Committee. This committee will work on a conceptual plan for a trail along Carrboro's section of Morgan Creek, extending west from Smith Level Road toward University Lake. This committee will begin meeting in the fall of 2006.

FISCAL IMPACT

Receiving 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).