

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. D(2)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: December 5, 2006

TITLE: Review of the Reallocation of State TIP Funds to Provide Additional Bike Facilities on Estes Drive

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___NO__X__
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Carrboro Transportation Priority List C. Map of Estes Drive	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale McKeel – 918-7329

PURPOSE

At its meeting on November 21, the Board of Aldermen requested that an agenda item be prepared for the December 5 meeting to discuss the reallocation of state TIP funds to provide additional bike facilities on Estes Drive. A resolution has been prepared which would authorize the request for the reallocation of funds and request a preliminary study and cost estimate.

INFORMATION

The Town of Carrboro 2007-2013 Transportation Priority List was adopted March 1, 2005 and revised on October 3, 2006. The Board's number 1 priority project was on Estes Drive to "add bike lanes, sidewalks, and transit accommodations on both sides of the road from Greensboro Street to Town limits, as well as a multi-use path from Williams Street to Estes Drive to provide an alternative bicycle-pedestrian connection" (Attachment B).

The Draft 2007-2013 State Transportation Improvement Program does not include funding for improvements to Estes Drive. However, it includes a funded project E-4710 (\$650,000) scheduled for construction in 2007 to install bicycle facilities (four foot wide shoulders) on Seawell School Road from Estes Drive to Homestead Road. The project is partially located within the Town of Chapel Hill.

During the summer of 2005, the North Carolina Department of Transportation installed a wide shoulder on Estes Drive in Chapel Hill from Seawell School Road to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. This shoulder measures between two and four feet in width. The project was funded from the NC "Moving Ahead" program. The program provided State funds for highway improvements that could be constructed without major engineering work or the acquisition of additional rights of way or easements.

There are currently existing sidewalks and bicycle facilities along Seawell School Road, but they are sporadic and disconnected. The Town's request for funding of the Seawell School Road project is to provide continuous sidewalks and bicycle facilities from Estes Drive Extension to Homestead Road to connect existing neighborhoods to the Elementary, Middle and High Schools.

The funded project included in the Draft 2007-2013 State Transportation Improvement Program for Seawell School Road is to provide bicycle facilities from Estes Drive Extension to Homestead Road. NCDOT staff states that the \$650,000 funding allocated in the FY 2007-2013 Transportation Improvement Program would be insufficient for the project. A revised cost estimate of \$2,000,000 was prepared by NCDOT earlier this fall.

Because there are insufficient funds to provide the project originally envisioned for Seawell School Road, and because the improvement of bicycle facilities on Estes Drive would provide for a more continuous bicycle facility between Chapel Hill and Carrboro, town staff believes that there is merit in the proposal to reallocate the funding to the Estes Drive Extension project.

Town staff also believes that there may be possible constraints to implementing the proposal, including the potential need for additional right of way, conflict with existing utilities and the steep topography bordering the westbound lane of Estes Drive. A basic feasibility study has been conducted on these proposed improvements by the North Carolina Department of Transportation with a preliminary cost estimate of \$480,000.

A typical Transportation Improvement Project requires one to two years lead time for feasibility, design and acquisition. Even if funding is available in 2007, reallocation of the funding may not result in immediate project implementation. If the Board supports the proposed reallocation of funding, the Board may also wish to request that the North Carolina Department of Transportation clarify the project scope and cost estimate.

If the funds are reallocated in the Draft 2007-2013 State Transportation Improvement Program from the Seawell School Road project to an Estes Drive project, it is likely that any state-funded improvements to Seawell School Road would be delayed for several years.

The Chapel Hill Town Council is scheduled to discuss the reallocation on December 4, 2006. The Draft 2007-2013 State Transportation Improvement Program is currently under negotiation between the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO). If both Chapel Hill and Carrboro support the reallocation, it should be possible to make the proposed change in funding priorities as part of those negotiations.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no local match required for the state funds regardless of whether they are spent on Seawell School Road or Estes Drive. However, plans have been prepared for a sidewalk on one side of Estes Drive using 2003 bond funds. For those portions of Estes Drive in Carrboro where a bike lane would be built, there will be a cost to modify the sidewalk design plans to take into account the bike lane.

RECOMMENDATION

Town staff recommends that the Board of Aldermen pursue a funding reallocation. Adoption of the attached resolution would authorize the request for the reallocation of funds and request that a preliminary study and cost estimate be carried out as soon as possible.