

A RESOLUTION RECEIVING ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS AND
TAKING FURTHER ACTION ON A REVISED DESIGN FOR
SMITH LEVEL ROAD IMPROVEMENTS
RESOLUTION NO. 25/2010-11

WHEREAS, planning activities related to improvements to Smith Level Road in Carrboro have occurred since the 1980s;

WHEREAS, the Smith Level Road corridor has been identified as a priority for the Town;

WHEREAS, under Transportation Improvement Program project #U-2803, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has proposed a revised design for improvements to Smith Level Road from the Town limits south of Woodcrest Drive to the Morgan Creek bridge;

WHEREAS, the Board of Aldermen received public comments and additional project information at a public hearing held on April 27 and continued on June 1 and September 7 of this year; and

WHEREAS, NCDOT has proposed certain changes to the revised design considered at the June 1 public hearing continuation;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Carrboro Board of Aldermen that the Board of Aldermen receives the staff report and additional public comments on the revised design for Smith Level Road.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Carrboro Board of Aldermen that:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

This is the 28th day of September in the year 2010.



TOWN OF CARRBORO

NORTH CAROLINA

MEMORANDUM

DELIVERED VIA: ☒ *HAND* ☐ *MAIL* ☐ *FAX* ☐ *EMAIL*

DATE: September 24, 2010

TO: Steven Stewart, Town Manager
Mayor and Board of Aldermen

FROM: Patricia McGuire, Planning Administrator
Jeff Brubaker, Transportation Planner

RE: Smith Level Road (TIP #U-2803): September 28 public hearing
continuation

Background

NCDOT is proposing a revised design for improvements to Smith Level Rd. from the Town limits south of Woodcrest Dr. to the Morgan Creek bridge (Bridge No. 88). The improvements comprise State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project #U-2803.

The Board of Aldermen received public input on the revised design during a public hearing held on April 27, 2010, and continued on June 1 and September 7. Modifications to the revised design, which were made in response to previous Board of Aldermen and Transportation Advisory Board questions and comments, were presented at the September 7 meeting. At this meeting, the Board of Aldermen continued the public hearing to September 28 and referred additional questions and comments to Town staff.

The Board of Aldermen requested clarification on the points listed below. Additional information is also presented.

A. Possibility of trading the sidewalk on the east side of the road from Willow Oak Ln. to University Commons bus stop for additional sidewalk south of Woodcrest

Staff recommends that the sidewalks be retained as proposed in the design.

Sidewalk from Willow Oak to University Commons driveway bus stop – east side

The Board of Aldermen inquired about the possibility of removal from the revised design

of a proposed sidewalk of approximately 930 ft. extending from the bus stop at the main University Commons driveway to a future crosswalk at Willow Oak, in exchange for a sidewalk on the east side, south of Woodcrest.

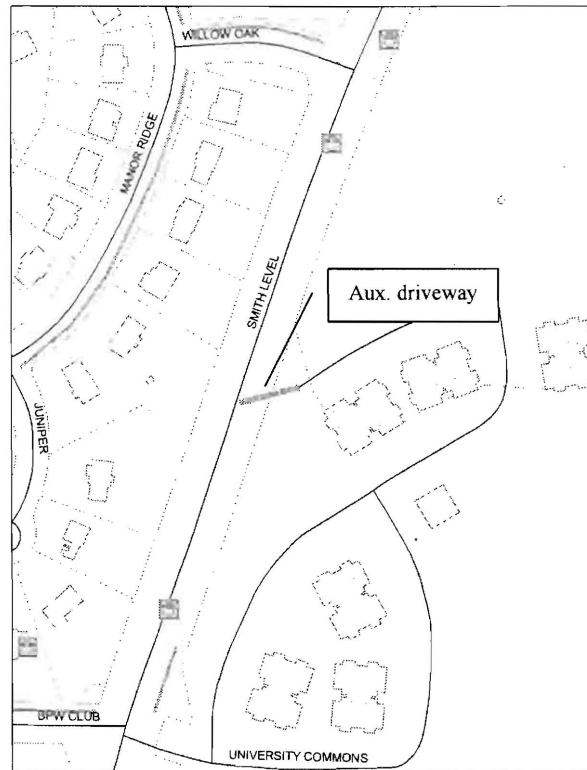


Figure 1. Map of Smith Level Rd. between BPW Club Rd. and Willow Oak Ln. Bus stop locations are approximate. At this time, a short sidewalk segment serves the bus stop at University Commons.

In 2000, according to the U.S. Census, there were 324 people living in the University Commons and Shepherd House area. About three-fourths of the occupied housing units were renter units. In addition to the main driveway, there is an auxiliary driveway providing access to the northern cluster of University Commons apartments. This driveway is located approximately 400 ft. north of where the existing sidewalk ends at the bus stop (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Auxiliary driveway providing access to University Commons, on the east side of Smith Level Rd. between BPW Club Rd. and Willow Oak Ln. (Source: Google Street View)

There is a pair of bus stops at Willow Oak Ln. serving the J, D (northbound only), and Saturday JN routes. FY 2008-09 daily boarding and alighting data are below.

Stop	Daily ridership			
	Boardings	Alightings	Total	Ridership percentile (Carrboro stops)
Northbound stop, east side	9	5	14	58 th
Southbound stop, west side	3	25	28	43 rd

Table 1. FY 2008-09 daily boarding and alighting data for the bus stops at Willow Oak Ln.

The lopsided distribution of boardings vs. alightings is expected given that buses going north are generally heading to the University and buses going south are generally heading from the University. Almost three times as many riders get off at the SB stop than board at the NB stop. Because the southbound J turns right onto BPW Club Rd., there is no southbound stop that is south of Willow Oak. This fact and the ridership figures show that the Willow Oak bus stops serve an average number of riders compared to other stops in Carrboro. It may also be that a substantial number of the SB stop alightings are University Commons residents getting off at Willow Oak Ln. and walking to the auxiliary driveway.

A question was raised at the June 16 TAB meeting: instead of building a whole sidewalk from Willow Oak to the University Commons driveway bus stop, could something less than that be built – such as only a landing or concrete pad for the northbound Willow Oak bus stop – that would be enough to anchor the proposed crosswalk north of Willow Oak but would not extend south? It was pointed out that new marked crosswalks on Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd. in Chapel Hill connect to bus stops that are not accessed by contiguous sidewalks. In general, a crosswalk may be possible in the absence of a contiguous sidewalk – as long as ADA guidelines related to bus stops and pedestrian crossings were met. However, pedestrians who choose to walk on the east side of the road would not be accommodated by a sidewalk.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the “presence of a sidewalk or pathway on both sides of the street corresponds to approximately an 88% reduction in “walking along road” pedestrian crashes”.¹ Pedestrians tend to choose the shortest distance to a destination² and therefore may not necessarily be expected to walk only where there is a

¹ <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/memo071008/>

² <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/08may/04.cfm>

sidewalk. Because of this, NCDOT and FHWA's Pedestrian Safety workshop recommends against a sidewalk on only one side of the street compared with on both sides.³

According to FHWA's *PEDSAFE* guidebook, walking conditions to and from transit stops are important factors in transit usage:

When development occurs around a transit stop, more transit can be supported, and people will have more options for how to travel there. Special attention should be paid to how people will get from the transit stop to their destinations. No matter how convenient the trip is otherwise, if pedestrians don't feel safe for even a short distance, they will choose not to go, or to go by another mode (usually driving—and the more people who drive, the less pedestrian-friendly a place becomes).⁴

Given the updated cost estimate for the Town's share of sidewalks, which is \$54,772, and the fact that the sidewalk on the east side of the road from Willow Oak Ln. to University Commons bus stop is about 11 percent of the total length of proposed sidewalks, it is estimated that the Town would save about \$6,000 from omitting this sidewalk from the plans.

Sidewalk south of Woodcrest Dr. – east side

As discussed at the Sept. 7 continuation, NCDOT has modified the design to include a sidewalk connection south of Woodcrest on the west side of Smith Level but has not felt it warranted to include a sidewalk on the east side. Woodcrest is the nearest intersection north of the beginning of the project. Unlike on the high school property on the west side, there is no sidewalk on the east side with which to further connect. The grade leading up to the roadway is >30%. Tying the grade in to include a sidewalk may require additional ROW and cost. In 2000, the area south of Woodcrest within Carrboro's ETJ had a population of 10.

According to GIS data, the Carrboro Town limits extend about 340 ft. south of Woodcrest Dr., including the current Smith Level Rd. ROW. The Carrboro ETJ extends another ~340 ft. south of Woodcrest on the east side. Beyond that is Chapel Hill's Planning Jurisdiction (Figure 3). Chapel Hill's Greenway Master Plan suggests a potential greenway link from Southern Village to Smith Level Rd. just south of Ray Rd. The plan states: "It might be possible to provide a link from the Fan Branch Trail in Southern Village in Chapel Hill to the Chapel Hill/Carrboro City Schools third high school site in Carrboro."⁵ Chapel Hill planning staff have indicated that there is currently no funding or timeline for the development of this connection.

³ NCDOT, FHWA, ITRE. (2010). Designing Streets for Pedestrian Safety. Two-day workshop, April 27-28.

⁴ <http://www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe/background.cfm>

⁵ <http://www.ci.chapel-hill.nc.us/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=1383>, p. 85

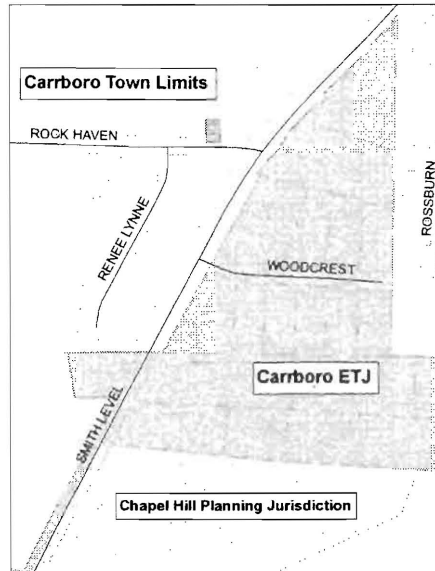


Figure 3. GIS representation of municipal boundaries near Smith Level Rd. and Woodcrest Dr.

Access to Southern Village is provided by the Smith Level Rd. project in conjunction with a Safe Routes to School project being pursued by the Town of Chapel Hill (along with a financial commitment from the Town of Carrboro; see the Feb. 10, 2009, minutes for more information: http://www.townofcarrboro.org/BoA/Minutes/2009/02_10_2009.pdf). The latter will fill in the sidewalk gap between Rossburn Way and Cobbleridge Dr. The Smith Level Rd. project adds sidewalks on both sides of Culbreth Rd. up to Rossburn Way. Therefore a continuous sidewalk would exist on the southern side of Culbreth Rd. from Smith Level to 15-501 and complete pedestrian connections between Smith Level and Southern Village via Cobbleridge Dr., Gardner Cir., and the northern end of the Fan Branch Trail.

B. Impact of the project on Shepherd House

The revised design indicates no ROW acquisition necessary on the Shepherd House property. However, some temporary construction easement acquisition will need to take place.

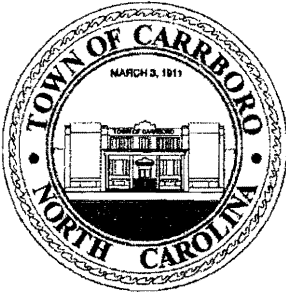
C. Other items

ROW at the Smith Level Rd.-Rock Haven intersection

A question was asked by a resident about whether there was enough space at this intersection for a roundabout given development plans at the SW corner that include bioretention areas. This question was forwarded to NCDOT staff. NCDOT has provided the following response:

We are in the process of requesting final surveys on the building location. At this point in our design, we probably will be able to avoid impacting the building and the biogardens on the property.

Staff recommends that this design component be addressed as the design progresses.



TOWN OF CARRBORO

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

RECOMMENDATION

September 16, 2010

SUBJECT: Smith Level Road (TIP Project U-2803)

MOTION: The Transportation Advisory Board recommends that the Board of Aldermen accept the current plan as proposed by the DOT for Smith Level Road.

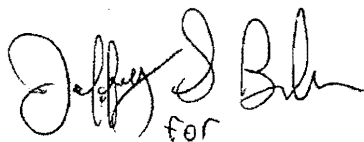
We think the sidewalk on the east side provides a safe way to access the bus stops on that side of the road. It will allow crosswalks to be installed providing access to Willow Oak Ln., to and from the bus stops, and will provide better handicap accessibility all around.

This project in its current form is vastly improved from its original conception and provides an attractive gateway into Carrboro. We think it currently reads as a pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-friendly plan, and we think that removing portions of the sidewalk at this point would make it less so.

Moved: Perry

Second: Krasnov

VOTE: Ayes (5): Hileman, Brown, Perry, Krasnov, Michler. Nays (0). Abstain (0). Absent (2): LaJeunesse, Pergolotti.



for
Charlie Hileman

TAB Chair

9 / 23 / 10
DATE