

# US 15-501 Corridor Study -- Final Report

## Compilation of Public Comments

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This document presents all the public comments the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) received concerning the final report for the US 15-501 Corridor Study. The comments are separated into two sections:

Comments – Starting on page 1, comments received by electronic mail are arranged by the date in which they were received; the earliest are first.

Letters – Starting on page 10, formal letters and images submitted by electronic mail or at the MPO Board's October 14 public hearing are presented.

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Andrew,

I own the building, address below, on the Durham Chapel Hill Boulevard.

I, and I think I can generally speak for my neighbors, want good access, public utilities, and good design.

Simply adding additional lanes, and reducing access is not the answer. We have owned our property since 1979 (which probably would have been the time to make 15-501 limited access from South Square to Chapel Hill), but that ship has sailed.

We need less concrete and asphalt and more imaginative engineering, sustainable landscape, and better maintained current infrastructure.

I am extremely opposed to any limited access "improvements" on 15-501.

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More, intense, building along the corridor will only serve to make a bad situation worse.

Transit systems have already maxed out the number of busses that can travel along this route. The heavy traffic, combined with the absence of sidewalks and lack of trees makes the route dangerous and undesirable for pedestrians--especially in the heat of the summer months.

Already the lack of trees and vegetation along the route causes significant noise and pollution which threaten the health and comfort of the adjacent communities.

Additional dense development along the corridor will make it unlivable.

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Dear Mr Henry,

I like the proposed changes to the 15-501 corridor. I avoid using 15-501 because of the heavy traffic and congestion. It looks like these changes will improve the access to 15-501 and driving. I appreciate that you are concerned about preserving the natural areas along the corridor.

Thank you,

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This is in the area I have been discussing for the last year. I hope they finish the Greenway behind The Sheraton and connect our Greenway at Greenfield Commons, CH, to the street and sidewalk at Europa. The old people have to climb up hill and walk through parking lot with cars backing up, very dangerous. I have already written to everyone and they said the area belongs to DOT, they should fix, (I wrote to them also).

They wait for new builders to add Greenway sections, but this won't happen behind The Sheraton.

It's sad, the last time I tried to take my bike up that rough area to Sheraton parking lot, to reach sidewalk at Europa, I tripped on tree limb, I quit riding my bike after that.

You're probably not the right one to write to, I've written to all others, so please, don't send me addresses.

Thank you for listening.

[Editor note: This comment was referred to Chapel Hill transportation staff.]

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Hello Mr. Henry,

I am a Durham resident and I would love it if bicycle transportation was given more priority both in this review and in future visions for the city. I know distances here are greater than in the great biking cities of the world like Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Paris, but this mode of transportation must be a focus of Durham in the coming years as people become more aware of the true socio-environmental impacts of oil/fossil fuel use.

Thank you for considering my words,

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Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the 15-501 Corridor Study for the northern part of 15-501 in Chapel Hill.

For the section of 15-501 that the study covers, I am optimistic that the proposed changes will result in a more urban and multi-modal / pedestrian / cyclist friendly live and work place. However, given Chapel Hill's continued low desirability for locating medium to large businesses in the area, commuting to

Durham, RTP, and Raleigh will continue to be an intensifying reality. How many more people does this 20 year planning horizon assume will need to use this corridor?

Sections of the corridor are already of insufficient traffic carrying capacity for morning rush hour. A predictable net gain in population continues each year, with high and low density housing continuing to be added to the south and west of Carrboro and Chapel Hill. People choosing to live in these rapidly expanding / sprawling locations now and over the next 20 years will add many vehicles to the road to travel to jobs on the east and north east of Carrboro and Chapel Hill.

Noting this, my largest concern about this study is it does not include the most congested portion of 15-501 in my commuting experience, which I find to be the section between Glenn-Lennox/15-501 and S. Columbia St where Hwy 54 and US 15-501 become one road. This section is the ONLY artery for people commuting from the south side of Carrboro/Chapel Hill and points further West and South to get to jobs in Durham, RTP, Raleigh. I have commuted from south end of Carrboro to North Hills Raleigh for the last 6 years. The slowest and most consistently slowest section of my morning commute is the section where 54 and 15-501 are the same road. This section of road and the area of 54 through Glenn Lennox (the ramps are outdated and dangerous for pedestrians/cyclists/buses) turns an ave 48 min commute into a 55 min commute each way.

Please consider adding a lane in each direction on the 54/15-501 corridor. I anticipate this congestion will intensify to the point of total gridlock as developers continue to add a lot of housing along 15-501 south of Carrboro, and those cars load onto 54/15-501 and 54 on to RTP and Raleigh. There are several accidents a week in this area from the current congestion (pre-COVID). I anticipate instances of road rage, driving off the side of the road, cutting off buses, collisions with pedestrians and cyclists will likely all significantly increase in several years if plans are not made now to increase the traffic carrying capacity of 54/15-501 and 54 to I-40.

I am concerned because road projects in the Triangle have a tendency to spend years and a lot of money, and then do much less than they could have to alleviate traffic congestion and shorten commute times. This in spite of well predicted population growth and multi-year advanced notice / indications of where developers intend to add density/vehicles to the road. Whatever it takes to get that done and fix the poor condition (regular deep potholes that damage vehicles under the bridge and deep standing water) and dangerous arrangement (ramp entering 54 alongside Fresh Market where I've seen several pedestrians/cyclists/buses almost get hit; ramp from 54W entering 15-501 South) of the Glenn Lennox / 54 / 15-501 clover leaf.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment,

[Editor note: Staff notified this citizen that TIP project U-5304 is to make multimodal improvements along the segment of Us 15-501 identified in this comment.]

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I really like the conceptual design. My only issue is the timeframe. We need to get this project finished in 5-10 years, not 20+ years. Please raise taxes or do whatever it takes to get this done sooner rather

than later. Traffic between Durham and Chapel Hill is intolerable. I can't imagine waiting 20 years to get relief.

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Hello,

I read the study about reimagining 15-501, and I just wanted to say that I love all of the ideas there! Thank you very much for your hard work. This plan would be a big improvement for the whole 15-501 area, and I hope we can implement it as quickly as possible.

Thanks again,

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**RTA endorses a new 15-501 vision**

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization, a member of the RTA Leadership Team, has released a recommended improvement concept for the 15-501 corridor between Chapel Hill and Durham. The MPO vision includes new transit priority lanes for US 15-501 while eliminating all stoplights north of I-40. RTA has endorsed the general recommendation, and we are working with our founding member chambers in the western Triangle, The Chamber For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, to explore and highlight additional opportunities for enhancement of this corridor concept. *You can read more about the proposed improvements in [this RTA blog](#).*

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hello Andrew

I don't have in detail comments but I am writing in support of all separated bike and ped improvements along 15-501. lowering MV speeds along the corridor would help as well.

thank you

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We own and operate hotel business at 5310 McFarland Drive in Patterson Place Development in the area.

We are very concerned about the impact proposed rerouting of the traffic would have on our business, entire Patterson Place shopping center and adjoining other commercial developments.

We urge you not proceed with the design as outlined in the study. It would put viability of the entire existing developments in the area in Jeopardy.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

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## PROPOSED FUTURE CHANGES TO MT. MORIAH ROAD X 15-501 INTERSECTION

Hello,

I am writing this in opposition to the proposed changes at this intersection. Eliminating the traffic light will severely impact the access to our restaurant. In fact, the proposed access will be re-routed past our direct competitor (Chipotle) and make us irrelevant.

Please leave the traffic light at Mt Moriah Road to preserve the life of the retail businesses that have already been severely impacted by Covid-19 and are barely surviving. If there is a need to turn 15-501 into a freeway, please start it at least a half a mile North of this vital intersection.

Thank you..

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Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the horrendous 15-501 corridor. Pre-pandemic I had to drive it twice a day from I-40 to the Europa Center. My suggestions are:

1. Although roundabouts can be very effective, the one on 15-501 is not. It would greatly help to make that more efficient.
2. coordinate the numerous traffic lights.
3. install safe bike lanes.
4. obviously Wegman's in Chapel Hill will increase the amount of traffic. At some point, not every business that wants to locate here can be allowed. Hopefully the Wegman center will not morph into another strip shopping center. The amount of nail salons, fast food restaurants & boutique stores don't actually create a significant amount of jobs, they just add to traffic congestion.
5. Planting of large tree's near 15-501 to mitigate pollution and decrease the road appearing to be a gateway to a large industrial park.

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In spite of the centrifugal requirements for separation forced on us by Covid-19, I believe the future of a sustainable world must be centripetal - a coming together into rich areas of density and diversity where mobility needs or wants can be met with something other than an SUV-size SOV - a 'transit-centric' world rather than the auto-centric development that has dominated the American landscape since the GIs came home from WWII.

We almost got it right, in the sense that we put an excruciatingly long LRT and associated land use planning process ahead of a highway planning process, and we need to do that again but rejecting any consideration of highway planning/programming until we know what will replace LRT in all its dimensions, where it will go and what type of city we can use it to build. Further road development

should only be ancillary to transit+transit-friendly land-use planning, accommodating those uses whose mobility needs could never be met with transit.

The world is changing at ever increasing speed, and the old nostrums about deadlines for achieving carbon neutrality or carbon zero emissions need to be moved forward by considerable margins.

Without strong leadership from this board, those who can afford it will chase technological improvement as they track down a path from the internal combustion engine to electric motors to eventual hydrogen based solutions, but if we don't put "transit-centric" considerations at the highest level in all transportation and land-use planning, we will still be indiscriminately chasing asphalt as we move forward through the next few decades.

Attached are my comments on the consultants recommendations for 15-501 improvements.

As you might guess from the above, I believe that at best, they can be "accepted" but not adopted... that this study should be parked on an all-but-unreachable very high shelf until we have good transit plans coming out of the Orange and Durham County efforts underway.

I thank you in advance for the time you give to my package. This is not a topic that can be addressed with bumper sticker level comments, and there is too much at stake for all decision makers to fail to consider that the 15-501 corridor and its interchange with I-40 are unique areas in the D-CH metro area, and the stage must be set for the four quadrants of the interchange to become valuable sponges for high-quality, high-value urban growth.

[Editor note: Mr. Waldroup's maps and attachments are shown in the section of this document that presents documents from the October 14, 2020 MPO Board public hearing.]

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We have only noticed one bicycle in the years since the restriping occurred.

Thus see no bicycle reason for the restriping.

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Good afternoon -

The plan to include a safe bike/pedestrian bridge over I40 is fantastic and must happen.

In most of Durham there is a lack of sidewalks on busy streets (outside of downtown) despite frequent pedestrian traffic.

This is very noticeable regarding the 15-501 I40 overpass, but is something that needs to be addressed on basically the entire road, and several others.

I also couldn't tell from the plans, but there should definitely be additional crosswalks (if not full-on traffic lights) to the section between Shannon Road and University Drive; there are several intersections

where a pedestrian may want to cross. Crosswalks a) give drivers an area to expect and look out for pedestrians and b) gives those pedestrians additional legal protection should they be struck by a vehicle while crossing in a crosswalk versus “just going for it” elsewhere.

Thank you.

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Mr. Henry,

I support the vision for redeveloping 15/501. I look forward to the day when I can travel in a dedicated bus lane to Chapel Hill and take a multi-use bike trail back to Durham. I hope these roads can be reworked to support higher volumes via public transit and the car-centric big box developments can be redeveloped into higher-density mixed use.

Thank you for the work you are doing.

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John,

Thanks for taking the time to comment on the US 15-501 Corridor Study. Below is a summary of your comment points. Please send me any clarifications.

- The MUP on the north side of US 15-501 should not angle between the rear of Oak Creek Village shopping center and New Hope Creek. It should follow US 15-501 and the shopping plaza parking boundary as close as possible to impact the flood plain and wild life area as little as possible.
  - The MUP should cross US 15-501 at the proposed collector street and bridge that would be east of Southwest Durham Drive. This crossing would have less impact on New Hope Creek and the wild life area than the proposed crossing at New Hope Creek.
  - There is a better option for the MUP between and through Eastowne and New Hope Commons.
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Dear Chair Jacobs, Andy Henry, and others,

I had thought I would speak at tomorrow's meeting about the plans for 15-501, but there are so many projects to review and they all require more time than I have right now. I did attend some of the early drop-ins, though, and looking at the summary I have the following comments:

1. The cross-section on section 1 is massive, and I think it would be useful to show it beside the current cross-section so people will see just how massive it is.

2. I thought the problem being addressed was congestion on 15-501, but adding more lanes will equal more congestion, so I find the addition of any lanes other than one for high-speed transit and for bicycle and pedestrian activity to be counter productive. NCDOT already spends over 25% of its budget on maintenance and millions each year on flood damage, yet seems to not make the connection between

more pavement and more flooding. Please do not equate moving cars with moving people. There are many ways to make driving less attractive, and while I understand that NCDOT still depends on fuel tax for part of its budget, I hope that we can work toward more environmentally friendly transportation choices.

3. I am not a fan of RCIs (reduced conflict intersections, previously known as Super Streets), in part because they encourage unsafe crossings by being spaced very far apart and also because they do not provide direct crossings, often requiring the pedestrians to go out of their way to get where they are going. I know that this project is full of them. If my observations don't apply here and these RCIs will be different, is there an example of a similar RCI that I can go look at that works well for people walking and biking? Also, the image shown of an RCI in the summary is an urban design. Is this what the RCI will look like on 15-501?

4. I could not find in the report exactly how bicycles will cross the side roads from the shared use paths. Will there be raised crosswalks and the use of color and shark's teeth to increase safety? Also, will Right on Red be restricted where shared use paths cross the side streets?

I appreciate the opportunity to make these comments, and I hope you will share them with the rest of the MPO committee. Thanks for all of your work.

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Hello,

I'm a resident of Summerfield Crossing, off Dobbins Road. I would like to request that a traffic noise mitigation barrier be installed along Dobbins Road (At least from Erwin Road to Franklin Street). Since part of the median is already torn up due to the OWASA work, now is a good time to install one. This used to be a quiet, peaceful place to live, but with over a year of OWASA construction (now even all night!), and all the new apartments and businesses being built, the traffic has become extreme noise pollution. Plus, OWASA has torn up a good chunk of what little buffer we had.

Specifically, I would like to see someone with professional expertise consulted. Meadowmont has a berm along Hwy 54 that is effective, incorporates horticulture, and is attractive. Since we're talking about a major gateway into Chapel Hill, that's also important. Currently there are trees on the median between the north- and southbound lanes and between 15-501 and Dobbins Road, but their foliage isn't at the right height for noise abatement. Plus, a lot of them are deciduous. Dense evergreen shrubs and small trees that are the height of tires and engines block noise, not tall trees with branches above these heights. Effective traffic buffers also incorporate berms and/or masonry walls.

Between the massive new apartment buildings that have been/are being built in The Blue Hill Zone, plus Wegman's opening this spring, traffic is going to continue increasing exponentially. The town has already subjected us to a year of extreme noise from the OWASA construction. Please consider how unlivable all this new traffic is going to make our neighborhood.

Thank you,

[Editor note: The US 15-501 Corridor Study is a long-range plan. Given the more immediate nature of this concern, this comment was forwarded to Chapel Hill Planning and NCDOT.]

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Mr Henry,

I am one of the owners of Durhill and Durhill II LLC. We own 108 ac on 15-501.

Please record the following comments:

- Proposed Street connection to SW Durham Drive appears inadequate and intersects 15-501 too close to the westbound 15-501 Ramp intersection. Also, there will be a grade differential of over 50 feet between the current grade of New Hope Commons Blvd and the grade of the top of the bridge over 15-501. I don't see how this can occur using acceptable design criteria.
- Plan does not reflect our right to directly access US 15-501.

Best,

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### Image 1

Thank you for this opportunity to address the MPO.

It was particularly gratifying to hear those who spoke out at the meeting where this was last presented to the Board that **this study did not appear to be one that lined up with the Board's values.**

**This is particularly true of the section running through the Patterson Place Compact Neighborhood (PPCN) that the City and County established last year.**

**The four quadrants (what I call the 4Q area) of the interchange represent among the most valuable land in the western part of the Triangle.**

With this image, I wanted to give you an idea of the size of the PPCN alone, and then ask you to **imagine how much bigger the larger circle would if you add in the areas of the Eastowne and Gateway/SECU quadrants.**

I think we are talking about approximately **750 acres.**

### Image 2

In this image, I have drawn a bright pink line around the **natural or defined boundaries of the 4 quadrants.,**

The plan proposes an **overpass at Mt. Moriah Rd.**

I hope you have heard **vigorous objection** to this proposal to **sever all connections** between MMR and 15-501, limiting access **for all of Patterson Place to one point** while **Chapel Hill has established ground rules that do not allow an interchange on their side of I-40 and they have two intersections** connecting the two quadrants on their side of I-40

**Why should that be?**

Durham has **abundant experience with transportation corridors slicing up a city.**

The **railroad** does it; **NC 147** does it.

This area should be a **sponge** for future **housing and employment** that **multiple consultants** have told us is coming.

**You should not allow a freeway to slice through the heart of Patterson Place.**

### Image 3

If I had to write a **bumper sticker** to express my request, it would be to ask that you "**Preserve a "freeway free zone" through Patterson Place**" where shown in the yellow box

1. **Preserve the Mt. Moriah Rd. intersection.**
2. **Complete a northern connection to the Southwest Durham Drive intersection and**
3. **allow a third intersection to enter Patterson Place where shown.**

**This** intersection will prove to be particularly valuable for regional transit alignments to and through the **two LRT station areas** and most importantly, **around the I-40 interchange**

#### Image 4

**Good urban areas need lots of internal connection paths.**

For **crossing I-40**, we already have **Old Chapel Hill Road and 15-501** itself.

The 1992 corridor study proposed **quadrant-to-quadrant connections where shown with the blue and green arrows**, but I want to offer the **2020 twist** to those original recommendations.

We are seeing a **incredible proliferation of different forms of electric mobility options**, and **these two new bridges should help create a rich cloud of mobility choices** to connect the two halves of the 4Q area.

**Neither** of the new crossings should be **general purpose roads**, allowing all comers ranging from **18 wheelers to personal automobiles**.

The **northern** bridge should be **limited to small electric transit shuttles, "taxis", and all of the electric 2 and 3 wheel mobility options** that are on the horizon.

A few examples of these are shown in the upper left hand corner of this image.

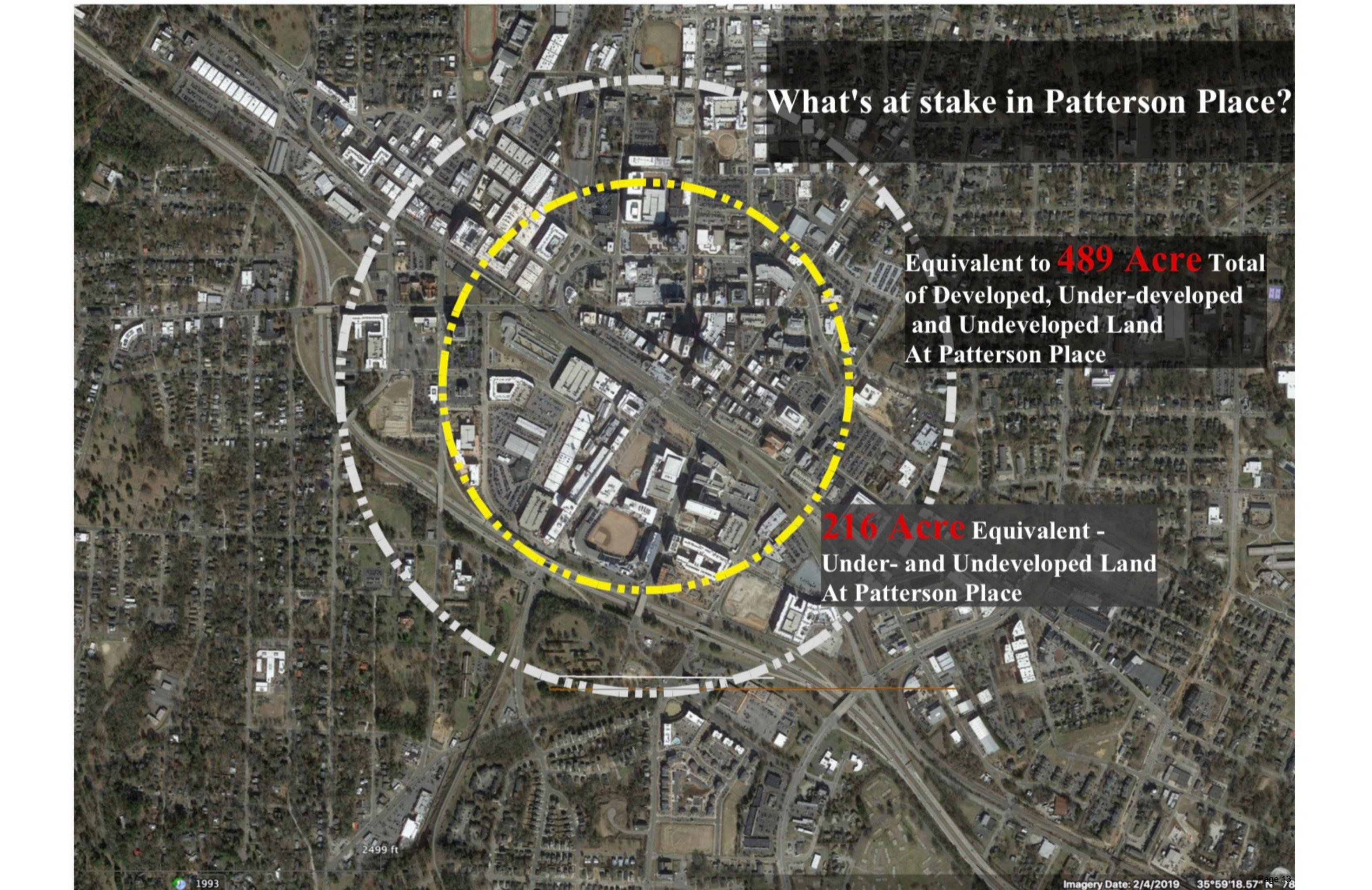
#### Image 5

The **southern bridge** should allow all of the same types of vehicles, but it should also be where **regional transit crosses I-40**, connecting the **Patterson Place and Gateway station areas**, leaving 15-501 at my **new proposed intersection in Patterson Place and returning to 15-501 at the eastern Eastowne Drive intersection** - thereby avoiding I-40 interchange.

To become a more **sustainable, transit-centric** urban area, we need to put **transit planning and funding at the heart of all that we do** - support **that** with **land-uses** that promote transit

ridership, and **FINALLY**, do the **road planning** that supports trips that transit could never service.

**We almost got it right with LRT** - we just made a **bad** early choice of technology - it was the seductive, bright shiny object of the moment, and now that we have set our sights on more **practical and affordable rubber-tire alternatives**, we have something that we can actually **start and complete**.



# What's at stake in Patterson Place?

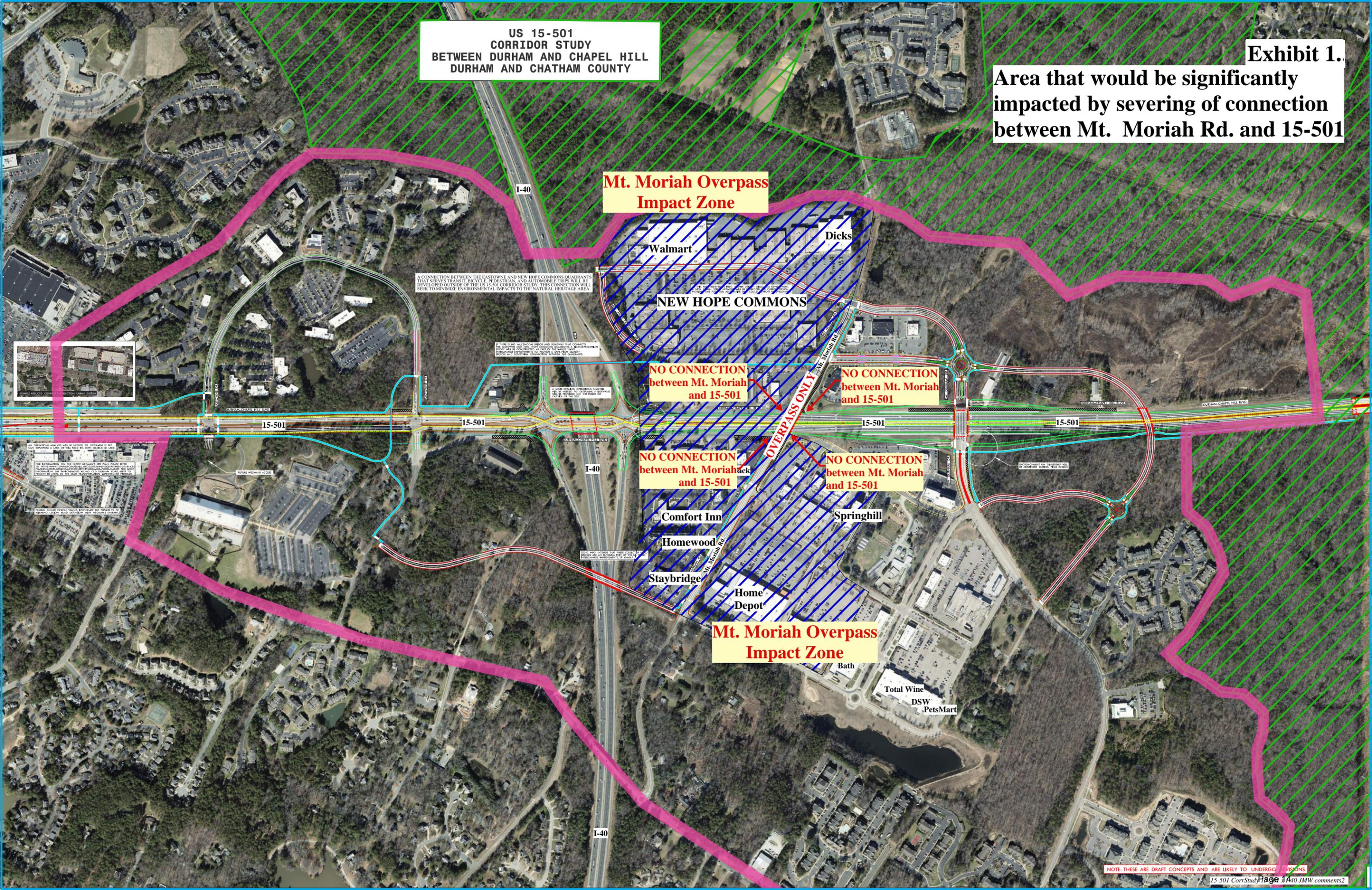
Equivalent to **489 Acre** Total  
of Developed, Under-developed  
and Undeveloped Land  
At Patterson Place

**216 Acre** Equivalent -  
Under- and Undeveloped Land  
At Patterson Place

**US 15-501  
CORRIDOR STUDY  
BETWEEN DURHAM AND CHAPEL HILL  
DURHAM AND CHATHAM COUNTY**

**Exhibit 1.**

**Area that would be significantly impacted by severing of connection between Mt. Moriah Rd. and 15-501**



**Mt. Moriah Overpass  
Impact Zone**

**NO CONNECTION  
between Mt. Moriah  
and 15-501**

**NO CONNECTION  
between Mt. Moriah  
and 15-501**

**NO CONNECTION  
between Mt. Moriah  
back  
and 15-501**

**NO CONNECTION  
between Mt. Moriah  
and 15-501**

**Mt. Moriah Overpass  
Impact Zone**

**US 15-501  
CORRIDOR STUDY  
BETWEEN DURHAM AND CHAPEL HILL  
DURHAM AND CHATHAM COUNTY**

**Exhibit 2.**

- "Freeway-free Zone"
- 3 Patterson Place Intersections
- Quadrant Names
- All 4Q I-40 Bridges & Uses

**Eastowne  
Quadrant**

**Patterson Place Compact  
Neighborhood<sup>1</sup> (north)**

**Concept 1 - Maintain Freeway-free Zone  
from I-40 ramps to crest of hill above  
New Hope Creek**



FOR INFORMATION ON THE LATEST WISCONSIN'S SEE PLAN, PLEASE REFER TO THE PROJECT WEBSITE. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON IMPROVEMENTS, ACCESS, AND SUPPLEMENTAL DATA, PLEASE CONTACT THE PROJECT TEAM AT 919.440.1234. PROJECT ID: 15-501. THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUREAU PROJECT ID: 15-501.

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Greater Eastowne - Gateway  
Patterson Place Boundary

**EASTOWNE**

**SECU  
SECU/Gateway  
Quadrant**

**GATEWAY**

Greater Eastowne - Gateway  
Patterson Place Boundary

**NEW HOPE COMMONS**

**Concept 2 - Promote Urban  
Development with THREE  
15-501 Crossing/Access Points**

**Homewood  
Staybridge**

**Home Depot**

**KOHL'S**

**Bed Bath**

**Danziger Drive**

**Total Wine**

**DSW**

**PetsMart**

**Patterson Place Compact  
Neighborhood (south)**

Greater Eastowne - Gateway  
Patterson Place Boundary

15-501 CorrStudy 15-501 x I-40 JMW comments2

NOTE: THESE ARE DRAFT CONCEPTS AND ARE LIKELY TO UNDERGO REVISIONS.

15-501 CorrStudy Page 15 of 16 JMW comments2

US 15-501  
CORRIDOR STUDY  
BETWEEN DURHAM AND CHAPEL HILL  
DURHAM AND CHATHAM COUNTY

- "Freeway-free Zone"
- 3 Patterson Place Intersections
- All 4Q I-40 Bridges



A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE EASTOWNE AND NEW HOPE COMMONS QUADRANTS THAT SERVES TRANSIT, BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN, AND AUTOMOBILE TRIPS WILL BE DEVELOPED OUTSIDE OF THE US 15-501 CORRIDOR STUDY. THIS CONNECTION WILL SEEK TO MINIMIZE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS TO THE NATURAL HERITAGE AREA.

#1 #2 #3 #4 #5

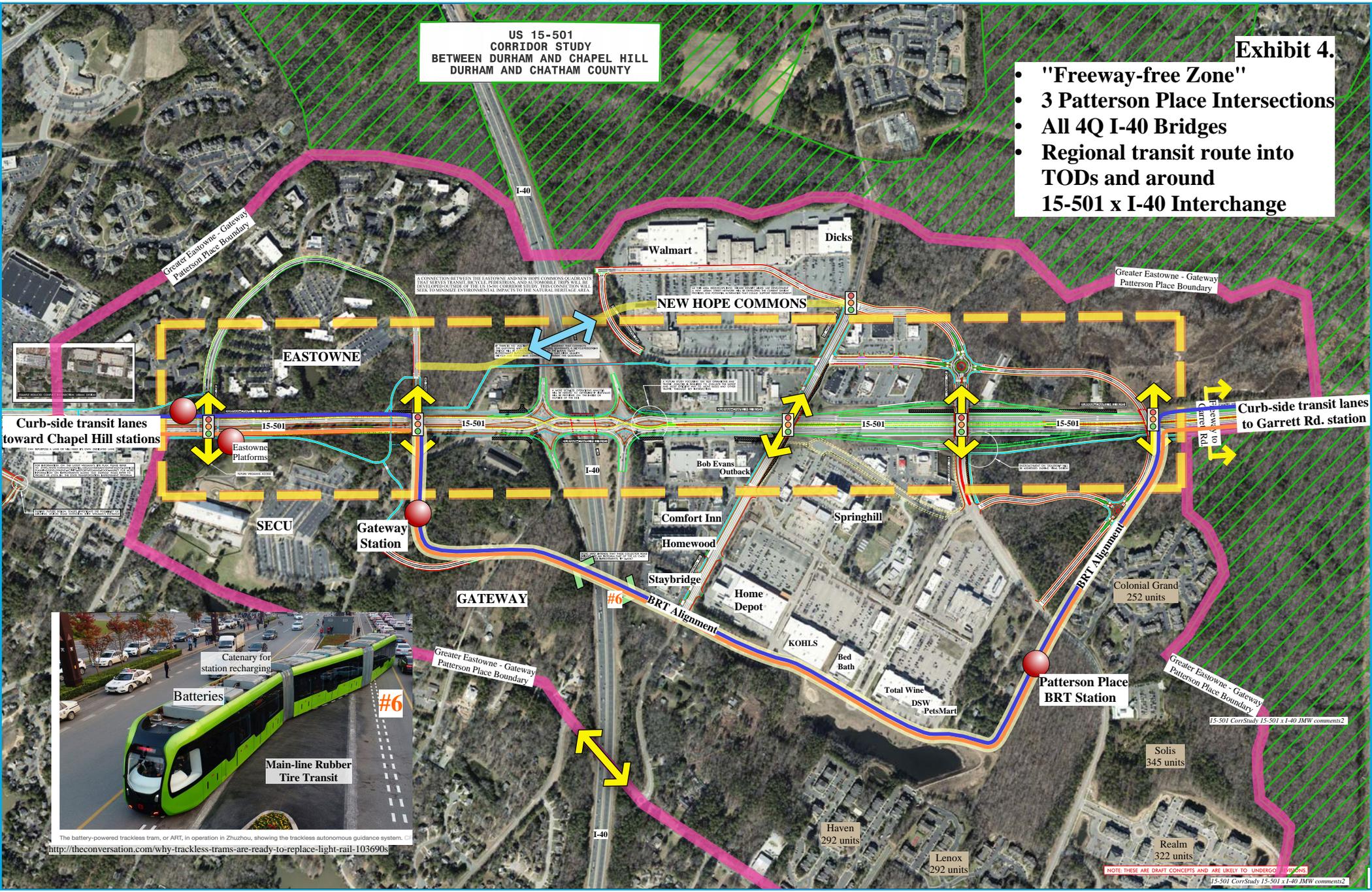
#1 #2 #3 #4 #5

15-501 CorrStudy 15-501 x I-40 JMW comments.2

**US 15-501  
CORRIDOR STUDY  
BETWEEN DURHAM AND CHAPEL HILL  
DURHAM AND CHATHAM COUNTY**

**Exhibit 4.**

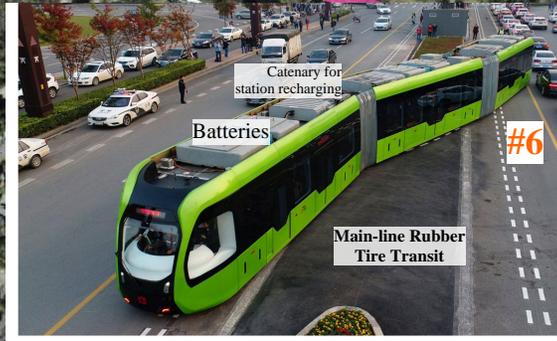
- "Freeway-free Zone"
- 3 Patterson Place Intersections
- All 4Q I-40 Bridges
- Regional transit route into TODs and around 15-501 x I-40 Interchange



A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE EASTOWNE AND NEW HOPE COMMONS OF ABRANTS TRAIL SHOULD BE MADE TO THE I-40 INTERCHANGE AND TO FORMERLY TRUCK TRAIL. THIS CONNECTION SHOULD BE MADE TO THE I-40 INTERCHANGE AND TO FORMERLY TRUCK TRAIL. THIS CONNECTION SHOULD BE MADE TO THE I-40 INTERCHANGE AND TO FORMERLY TRUCK TRAIL.

Curb-side transit lanes toward Chapel Hill stations

Curb-side transit lanes to Garrett Rd. station



The battery-powered trackless tram, or ART, in operation in Zhuzhou, showing the trackless autonomous guidance system. <http://theconversation.com/why-trackless-trams-are-ready-to-replace-light-rail-103690s>

NOTE THESE ARE DRAFT CONCEPTS AND ARE LIKELY TO UNDERGO REVISIONS  
15-501 CorStudy 15-501 x I-40 JMW comments2



October 13, 2020

Andy Henry  
Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO  
101 City Hall Plaza  
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Mr. Henry,

The RTA business coalition, The Chamber For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro, and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce applaud the work of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO on the US 15-501 corridor study, and we are pleased to express our support for the recommended improvement concept to reimagine 15-501, with some comments and suggestions for your consideration.

**The regional business community supports the study vision to create a multimodal 15-501 corridor that will:** “complement and support high-capacity transit and the adjacent, mixed use, and multimodal supportive development [and] provide for the safety, mobility, and accessibility of all users; including connections across and through the corridor.”

**We support the approach to prioritize transit while improving travel for all modes of transportation by eliminating stoplights north of I-40, creating a synchronized street south of I-40, adding bus priority lanes, and integrating bicycle and pedestrian facilities.** These improvements will also enable 15-501 to serve as an effective “FAST” corridor and a key piece of an emerging regional “Freeway And Street-based Transit” network that complements the upcoming bus rapid transit line in Chapel Hill and other enhanced multimodal corridors such as the I-885 connector in Durham, as well as potential updates to the transit plans in Durham and Orange counties.

**We also appreciate the opportunity to offer comments to help strengthen and advance the proposed concept, via further improvements to transit connectivity and accessibility to existing and future businesses. See detailed comments on the following page.** In addition, we request that the final study report include recent developments approved and proposed along the corridor—e.g., Patterson Place and Oakridge in Durham, and the Blue Hill District in Chapel Hill—and note potential development areas based on municipal land use and zoning updates.

**Finally, we encourage our partners to identify ways to accelerate or scale the recommended improvements so that our communities and entire region may realize the benefits of an enhanced 15-501 corridor more quickly.**

The regional business community applauds the leadership of the DCHC MPO to support our growing region. Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions and for your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

Aaron Nelson, President and CEO  
The Chamber For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro

Geoff Durham, President and CEO  
Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce

Joe Milazzo II, Executive Director  
Regional Transportation Alliance

## **Additional regional business community feedback in support of recommended improvement concept for 15-501**

### **South of I-40, along US 15-501:**

- We suggest operating the priority bus lane as a “RED” transit lane that allows for right turns, emergency response, and driveway access
- Ensure adequate accessibility to businesses and consult local business community in the design and consideration of the following:
  - Mitigating traffic bottlenecks at the future Wegmans’ site
  - Reviewing the south approach of Old Durham Rd. and Fordham Blvd. to improve business access
  - Retaining frontage roads for Dobbins Drive and East Franklin Street
  - Incorporating a multi-use path along the new “Collector Road Bridge”
  - Maintaining southbound access to 15-501 from Fordham Blvd.
  - Adding a grade separated intersection at Eastown Drive and Fordham Blvd.
- Review Chapel Hill Future Land Use Map to help ensure land use/mobility compatibility and accessibility

### **North of I-40, along US 15-501:**

- Maintain local roads and bicycle/pedestrian connections at grade
- Incorporate freeway transit stations for express service and/or moving dedicated transit lanes to the outside to better enable implementing BOSS (Bus On Shoulder System) operation for local service
- Ensure adequate accessibility to businesses and consider opportunities for directly serving adjacent developments such as Patterson Place and future developments such as Oakridge
- Review Durham Future Land Use Map to help ensure land use/mobility compatibility and accessibility

### **East of US 15-501, along Business 15-501:**

- Operate BOSS (Bus On Shoulder System) west of Chapel Hill Rd.
- Implement a peak-period transit lane using the parking lane east of Chapel Hill Rd. and/or by modifying lane or median widths
- Review Durham Future Land Use Map to help ensure land use/mobility compatibility and accessibility

October 14, 2020

**Via email: [andrew.henry@durhamnc.gov](mailto:andrew.henry@durhamnc.gov)**

Andrew Henry, Principal Planner  
Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization  
101 City Hall Plaza  
Durham, NC 27701

RE: Reimagining 15-501 Corridor Study

Dear Mr. Henry,

GoTriangle appreciates our partnership with the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the opportunity to provide comments on the Reimagining 15-501 study. This is a significant corridor for regional and local travel, and for transit service in particular. Accordingly, the recommendations and conceptual plans for future investments to US 15-501 are of strategic importance to the future of regional transportation. GoTriangle strongly endorses the inclusion of a bus lane and other transit-priority infrastructure in the recommended alternative, and is very supportive of coordinating such infrastructure with pending NCDOT projects within the corridor.

Transit service in the 15-501 corridor provides vital connections between two of the Triangle Region's largest and densest employment centers, totaling over 70,000 jobs, three major medical facilities, two research universities, Downtown Durham, Downtown Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and many other important community destinations along the way. GoTriangle operates two regional bus routes and GoDurham and Chapel Hill Transit operate five local bus routes in the corridor. Collectively, these services carry more than 6,000 riders per weekday and represent an ongoing annual operating investment of several million public dollars. Infrastructure improvements to increase bus speeds and ensure the reliability of these services are essential to ensuring their continued viability and effectiveness.

A future without prioritizing buses in the corridor, in light of increasing congestion and travel delay, would result in increased run times, less predictable on-time performance and an overall lower quality to service to riders. Slower and less reliable service not only costs more to operate, but also means that residents have less ability to use transit to access educational opportunities, employment, healthcare and the community as a whole. On-board rider survey data from 2018 overwhelmingly (over 60%) indicates that bus travel time reliability is a top area of improvement for riders on both GoDurham and GoTriangle. Accordingly, bus lanes and other transit-priority infrastructure are a clear priority for our services as a part of any planned improvements to the US 15-501 corridor.

As our organizations work with Orange and Durham counties to develop updates to the county transit plans, and as NCDOT moves forward with design on projects within this corridor, it will be essential to continue refining the details of transit service and physical infrastructure. The following items should be areas of focus during further design, study and coordination:

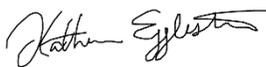
A stylized logo consisting of several overlapping triangles in shades of green and yellow, forming a larger triangular shape.

PO Box 13787  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709  
P: 919.485.7510 | F: 919.485.7547

- **Access to Transit:** Most transit trips in the corridor begin or end on foot. Pedestrian access to bus stops and crossings of 15-501, cross streets, and access ramps should be designed to maximize their safety, comfort and attractiveness. This can be achieved through techniques such as reducing design speeds, aligning crosswalks at 90 degree angles, minimizing crossing distances, reducing the use of double and triple right turn lanes, and tightening curb radii for general purpose vehicles by adjusting stop bar placement and by using low-profile, mountable curb aprons for larger vehicles.
- **Bus Stops:** Bus stops should be located at the far side of signaled intersections and adjacent to pedestrian crossings to provide a convenient and safe way to cross 15-501 for transit riders. Pedestrian crossings adjacent to bus stops should be designed to minimize the number of separate crossings and the overall amount of time to cross 15-501 to access the bus stop. Bus stops and potential transfer points must also be located to support efficient connections between different types of bus service and providers.
- **Future Transit Service Design and Transit Priority infrastructure:** As roadway design and the county transit plans progress, it will be essential to coordinate the design of infrastructure to support future transit service and vice-versa. Special attention needs to be given not just to how buses move within the corridor, but to how buses enter and exit the corridor to serve important destinations such as Eastowne, Gateway, Patterson Place, and New Hope Commons. The design and location of bus lanes, access ramps, queue jumps and other transit priority measures should support efficient routings for multiple potential local, express, and limited-stop bus rapid transit routes serving a variety of destinations within, adjacent, and beyond the corridor.

We look forward to continued partnership with the MPO, the Town of Chapel Hill, the City of Durham, and NCDOT to plan, design, and construct transit improvements as a part of pending and future investments within the corridor. Thank you for your work in coordinating this study and ensuring that this corridor balances the needs of all of its users.

Sincerely,



Katharine Eggleston, PE

Chief Development Officer  
GoTriangle

CC: Felix Nwoko, Transportation Planning Manager, DCHC MPO  
Julie White, Deputy Secretary for Multi-Modal Transportation, NCDOT  
Joey Hopkins, PE, Division Engineer, NCDOT  
Wright Archer, PE, Division Engineer, NCDOT  
Sean Egan, Transportation Director, City of Durham  
Bergen Watterson, Transportation Planning Manager, Town of Chapel Hill  
Jay Gibson, PE, General Manager, Durham County  
Travis Myren, Deputy County Manager, Orange County  
Charles Lattuca, President and Chief Executive Officer, GoTriangle  
Jay Heikes, Senior Transportation Planner, GoTriangle

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October 14, 2020

Andrew Henry  
Principal Planner  
Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization  
101 City Hall Plaza  
Durham, North Carolina 27701

Re: **US 15-501 Corridor Study (Durham – Chapel Hill)**

Dear Mr. Henry:

Thank you for the opportunity to present a spoken comment to the DCHC MPO board during today's public hearing. Please accept this letter as Home Depot's written comment on the US 15-501 Corridor Study. Home Depot welcomes the opportunity to discuss this matter further with the board and its staff.

Home Depot opposes the proposed changes to 15-501. Home Depot opposes these changes because (1) the grade separation of Mt. Moriah Road will increase traffic volume and speed, (2) the plans will pose unnecessary safety risks to pedestrians and motorists, and (3) the proposed changes are inconsistent with the goal of this project. Therefore, Home Depot urges reconsideration of these plans.

First, one of the stated goals of this project is to "improve mobility for all users." However, the proposed changes are ultimately contrary to that objective. Indeed, the full report acknowledges that turning Mt. Moriah Road into an overpass will result in "higher volumes of traffic using [the US 15-501 and SW Durham Interchange] to access adjacent developments." This design places those higher volumes of traffic closer to pedestrians, bicyclists, and low speed vehicles in the shopping center parking lot.

And, along 15-501, the proposed changes are certain to increase the speed of traffic. For example, there are numerous traffic lights and at-grade intersections in the Chapel Hill section of the project in areas that are just as busy as the Patterson Place area. However, once drivers clear those areas, they have open road and unhampered driving as 15-501 passes by Patterson Place. The project essentially changes 15-501 here into a freeway, and speeds are certain to far exceed the posted speed limit, just as you would expect them to do on a multi-lane road with no intersections and no stop lights.

Too, severing this connection between Mt. Moriah Road and 15-501 will mean that drivers on 15-501 will have to take a convoluted, confusing, and less-direct route. Specifically, visitors to Home Depot coming from I-40 would have to travel completely past Home Depot and past Mt. Moriah Road approximately a quarter mile to Southwest Durham Drive. This adds to the traffic

volume. Visitors coming from the other direction will also have their journey times lengthened under this proposal. Coming the other way, toward I-40 from Durham, visitors would have to turn onto Southwest Durham Drive well before the shopping center is visible; this also diverts additional traffic congestion onto Southwest Durham Drive. And, if drivers miss their turn, they must do complicated turns further down the road in order to get where they wanted to go.

The negative effects of this plan on Home Depot and similarly situated local businesses include increased average journey times for visitors and increased total distance travelled by visitors. The increased drive times and drive distances that this plan represents will likely be substantial in the aggregate.

Second, Home Depot believes that the proposed changes pose significant safety risks. Every additional minute that a confused and frustrated driver spends on the road represents an increased risk to other drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

In addition to that, the connector roads leading to Patterson Place inject high-speed and high-volume traffic into the shopping center. At Home Depot's end, the traffic enters the shopping center right at the store's entrance. The effect is that when shoppers are entering and exiting the store, they will have to contend with drivers coming off of the connector road. This poses a clear safety risk for the pedestrian traffic and store customers.

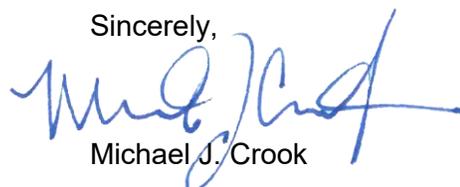
Third, the proposed changes are inconsistent with the redevelopment goal. While turning Mt. Moriah Road into an overpass and 15-501 into a super street might make some sense if the goal were to simply funnel as many cars down 15-501 as quickly as possible just as a freeway would do, the stated goals of the 15-501 Corridor Redevelopment Study aspire for much more. Among other objectives, the plan aims to "minimize physical and psychological barriers to non-motorized travel" and to "develop transportation infrastructure that prioritizes people." Both of these objectives are undermined by the proposed changes here.

As you know, Mt. Moriah Road presently connects the northern and southern sections of the Patterson Place Compact Neighborhood. Once this connection is severed, pedestrians as well as motorists will be physically and psychologically deterred from crossing 15-501. If 15-501 were allowed to become a freeway, that will eviscerate the growing urban community around Patterson Place because North-South connectors like Mt. Moriah Road are integral to the cohesiveness and viability of the area.

In light of all these drawbacks, it is difficult to see how the conversion of Mt. Moriah Road into an overpass—at a projected cost of nearly \$136,000,000—can be justified from a cost-benefit perspective. Home Depot believes that for a similar investment, a safer, more-sustainable innovative infrastructure solution can be designed for 15-501.

Based on these factors, Home Depot opposes the proposed changes.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Crook

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Andy Henry, Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO  
FROM: Michael Moorman, Chair, BPAC Plan Implementation and Evaluation Committee  
RE: Comments on the US 15-501 Corridor Study  
DATE: October 15, 2020

The Plan Implementation and Evaluation subcommittee of the Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission (BPAC) has reviewed the latest version of the US 15-501 Corridor Study. We are thankful for the opportunity to review this study, which is a bold vision of what is possible for this heavily travelled corridor. This letter will be considered by the Commission at its meeting on October 20 and a revised letter may follow.

We believe incorporation of the suggestions below will help the study to better fulfil its stated goals, especially improving accessibility and connectivity for all modes and improving mobility for all users.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments about our suggested changes.

### General comments

- There should be a commitment to provide at least one continuous main multi-use path (MUP) on each side of the corridor for segments 2 & 3, as is shown in segment 1. The one exception to this would be the New Hope Creek area, where the currently proposed MUP is acceptable.
- These main MUPs should avoid driveway crossings (where possible), avoid crossing from one side of the road to the other and use grade separation at busy intersections.
- The main goal of these main MUPs is to enable direct, low stress, east-west through traffic for cyclists and pedestrians (connecting the various areas along the corridor and beyond) as well as localized traffic. North-south connections across 15-501 and other east-west traffic can be accommodated with protected bicycle lanes, sidewalks or MUPs depending on the roadway type.
- We are concerned about pedestrian and bicycle crossings at the proposed 2-lane roundabouts in segments 2 & 3.
- Minimum width for MUPs should be 12 feet.

### I-40 Quad & Segment 2 (Patterson Place & New Hope Commons area)

- Provide a MUP (instead of bicycle lanes) for the roadway crossing of I-40 south of the I-40/15-501 bridge. This will maintain consistency with facilities to the east and west and prevent the need for cyclists to transition from uni-directional bicycle lanes to a bi-directional MUP.
- Additionally, a MUP should be provided in lieu of bicycle lanes to connect New Hope Commons to the proposed MUP to the east (toward New Hope Creek). This will maintain consistency with

facilities to the east and west and prevent the need for cyclists to transition from uni-directional bicycle lanes to bi-directional MUP.

- There should be more direct east-west connection through Patterson Place for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Please consider routing a bicycle and pedestrian facility along Danziger Drive and the eastern edge of Patterson Place toward SW Durham Drive, or routing a MUP along the northern side of Patterson place, as shown below:



- Provide appropriate bicycle facility on SW Durham Drive, per the MPO's Comprehensive Transportation Plan.
- Where MUPs, protected bicycle lanes and sidewalks cross driveways and roads, ensure that NACTO guidelines are followed including those regarding sight triangles.
- Though incorporation of bus lanes is part of a separate analysis, pedestrian and bicycle connections parallel to the corridor should be provided to access future stops/stations for Patterson Place and New Hope Commons.

#### Segment 2 (Garrett Road area to 15-501 Bypass)

- No direct MUPs are provided to connect segment 2 to segment 3 (i.e. the 15-501 Bypass area). Provide more direct MUPs through this area, which will involve grade-separated crossings through the interchange.
- Provide a MUP to connect the Garrett Apartments (SW corner of 15-501 & Garrett Road) to the MUP to the west. This will provide a more direct bike/ped access to points west, without having to cross over 15-501 and go around Oak Creek Village. Please see image below:



- There appears to be breaks in the MUPs north and south of 15-501 near Garrett Road intersection.
- On Garrett Road, north of 15-501, will there be a signalized crossing for the MUP at the entrance to Mark Jacobson or further north at Falls Mountain Way?
- Thanks for connecting the MUP to Sandy Creek Drive & the park. This will provide a connection to the Sandy Creek Trail.
- Provide bicycle lanes along Sandy Creek Drive and on Pickett between Sandy Creek Drive and Tower Blvd (see comment below).
- Where MUPs, protected bicycle lanes and sidewalks cross driveways and roads, ensure that NACTO guidelines are followed including those regarding sight triangles.
- To minimize crossing driveways on section between Garrett and 15-501 bypass, recommend placing the MUP between service road and 15-501.
- Though incorporation of bus lanes is part of a separate analysis, pedestrian and bicycle connections parallel to the corridor should be provided to access future stops/stations for the Garrett Road area and toward the Bypass.
- A grade separated bicycle and pedestrian crossing should be provided across the 15-501 corridor between Garrett Road and the Bypass.

### Segment 3

- See comment above concerning connecting MUPs between segments 2 and 3.
- Given that ADT is below 20,000 for this section, are 4 lanes required?
- Provide improved bicycle and pedestrian facility along Westgate Drive and Weymouth St. to connect 15-501 MUP to University Drive.
- As noted above, we are concerned about roundabouts with 4-lane traffic, especially since they will also involve bicycle and pedestrian crossings. If this corridor must retain 4 lanes and use roundabouts, bicycle and pedestrian traffic should be grade separated at the roundabouts. Alternately, provide signalized intersections.

- Where roundabouts are built, the turning radii should be as tight as possible to slow entering and exiting traffic, and slip roads to avoid the roundabout should not be built (e.g. Hope Valley Road @ University Drive roundabout and Erwin@NC751).
- Where MUPs, protected bicycle lanes and sidewalks cross driveways and roads, ensure that NACTO guidelines are followed including those regarding sight triangles
- More bicycle and pedestrian crossings should be provided across the 15-501 corridor in this segment, including between Shannon and Weymouth, between Weymouth and Academy Road, and between Academy and Chapel Hill Road.
- Please consider replacing the on ramp from Cornwallis Road to 15-501 and the off ramp from 15-501 to Academy with MUPs.
- Provide sidewalk and bicycle lanes along proposed connection to Academy Road.
- Provide sidewalk and buffered bicycle lanes along Tower Blvd. (or MUP on east side). This will provide a connection to Pickett Road.
- Where possible, provide space for trees along MUPs. There is not any tree coverage in this area and trees would provide shade for users of the MUPs.
- Where MUPs cross driveways and roads, ensure that NACTO guidelines are followed regarding sight triangles.

#### Segment 4

- Where roundabouts are built, the turning radii should be as tight as possible to slow entering and exiting traffic, bicycle and pedestrian crossings should be raised, and slip roads to avoid the roundabout should not be built (e.g. Hope Valley Road @University Drive roundabout and Erwin@Nc751).
- One or two bicycle and pedestrian crossings should be provided across 15-501 between Hope Valley Road and James St.
- Extend sidewalk and bicycle lanes from 15-501 down to Cornwallis Road along Legion Avenue, Hope Valley Road and James Street. This will connect the proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities along 15-501 with funded bike/ped facilities along Cornwallis.
- Where possible, provide space for trees. There is not much tree coverage in this area and trees would provide shade for users of the sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

#### Segment 1

- We request that the MUP be extended to the Lower Booker Creek Trail.

Mr. Henry,

On behalf of Bike Durham, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the final US 15-501 Corridor Study. US 15-501 between Durham and Chapel Hill is a crucial multimodal corridor, with frequent local and regional bus service to major commercial centers and apartment complexes. However, current roadway designs do not support safe and reliable connections for those walking, biking, and using transit, although many people currently attempt to walk and bike in this area. We applaud your efforts to rectify this situation. Without improvements to the corridor, current and future development along it will be largely accessible only by automobile and will continue to be unsafe for people walking, biking, and taking transit.

As advocates for safe, affordable, and sustainable transportation for all residents of Durham, regardless of race, wealth, gender identity, ability, or where they live, we commend the study team on creating a plan that starts to undo some of the current auto-centric roadway designs in favor of streets that are safe and comfortable for people to walk, bike, and use transit. This is particularly evident in the Rockwood and South Square sections of US-501 Business. More urban land uses are being developed near and along these sections, but these can only succeed if the street network supports them. We are similarly encouraged by the inclusion of dedicated bus lanes along the section between I-40 and US 15-501 Bypass, should such lanes be included in the updated Durham Transit Plan.

We believe the elements of this study that improve use of these more affordable means of transportation should be prioritized above improvements for single-occupancy vehicles. In addition, if recommendations in this study do not fit the newly adopted DCHC Metropolitan Transportation Plan Goals and Objectives, they should not be included.

Bike Durham believes that some of the designs in this study, while an improvement over current conditions, do not go far enough to create an environment that will make walking, biking, and transit truly safe and comfortable. BPAC has done an excellent job enumerating many of these instances. Bike Durham would like to highlight three: 1) the lack of adequate crossing opportunities in the Rockwood area, 2) the multi-lane roundabouts in the South Square area, and 3) the lack of direct ped/bike connections between the Garrett Road Apartments and commercial areas to the west such as Patterson Place and New Hope Commons. These design features, or lack thereof, place a higher priority on vehicle throughput than on creating a safe and inviting street network for people using other modes. We challenge the DCHC MPO to be even bolder in its vision of this corridor and make it one that supports the equitable and sustainable transportation goals Durham has set for itself.

In partnership,  
Marc Maximov  
Board Member/Advocacy Chair  
[Bike Durham](#)