

CHAPTER VIII
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

A. Technical Committee

A technical committee was appointed with representatives from the following:

- NCDOT Public Transportation Division
- NCDOT Project Development & Environmental Analysis Branch
- City of Durham Department of Transportation
- Town of Chapel Hill Planning Department
- Triangle Transit Authority (TTA)
- Duke University
- UNC - Chapel Hill
- Federal Highway Administration

The project team met with the technical committee monthly or more frequently as needed during the course of the project. The technical committee provided project input and direction on all aspects of the project.

B. Policy Oversight Committee

The Policy Oversight Committee's function on the project was one of approval and oversight. Representatives of this committee include:

- NC Board of Transportation (1 member)
- NCDOT, Deputy Secretary
- NCDOT, Chief Planning and Environmental Officer
- Mayor of Durham
- Durham City Manager
- Mayor of Chapel Hill
- Town of Chapel Hill Manager
- Triangle Transit Authority Board (1 member)
- Triangle Transit Authority General Manager
- Duke University President & Vice President
- UNC - Chapel Hill Associate Vice Chancellor & Assistant to Chancellor

Generally after meeting with the technical committee, the project team met with the Policy Oversight Committee to seek approvals at key milestone points in the study, before proceeding forward on the project. Meeting minutes from the policy oversight committee meetings during the Phase II MIS are provided in Appendix G.

C. Public Workshops

Two (2) public workshop series were held throughout the duration of the Phase II study. For each series, two (2) public workshops, one in Durham and one in Chapel Hill, were convened as an informational outreach to citizens of the study area and to encourage public participation in the study process.

The first workshop series was held in September 2000 and its purpose was to present the types of technology being considered for transit and to obtain input from the public. Additionally, the study process was outlined and presented for the public's information and comment. The second public workshop series was held in January 2001. At these workshops, the results of the Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill station area workshops were presented and preliminary alternative alignments from South Square to the Friday Center were presented. Brief presentations were made by the Mayors of the respective cities during the course of the workshops, followed by a brief question and answer period.

For each of the above workshops, postcards were mailed out beforehand to citizens on the mailing list and letters were mailed out to local public officials announcing the workshop and outlining the information to be presented. Each of the workshops was also announced via the local news media and posted on several websites including TTA's and the Town of Chapel Hill's. During the week of the second workshop series, NCDOT provided flashing variable message signs on US 15-501 informing drivers of the meeting times and locations. Handouts with graphics and comment cards were distributed at the workshop to solicit input on a broad range of project issues. Comment cards received during and after the workshops were reviewed and summarized a copy of this summary is provided in Appendix G.

Throughout the project a mailing list of interested citizens was developed and maintained. Over 1,800 citizens were on the mailing list at the end of Phase II. In addition to the efforts of the project team to involve and inform the public, several newspaper articles were published in local newspapers giving the project exposure. Copies of select newspaper articles regarding the project are provided in Appendix G.

D. Resource Agency Coordination

Formal resource agency coordination was not included in the Phase II MIS because the alternatives and corridors were substantially reviewed during Phase 1 and further coordination would occur during the project development/environmental studies stage of the project. However, at the request of the Policy Oversight Committee, in March 2001, a meeting with the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife, NC Division of Water Quality, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NC Division of Parks and Recreation Natural Heritage Program, and NC Department of Transportation was held. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of the project, identify any "fatal flaws", and to provide a forum for receiving input from the resource agencies. The agencies did not identify any "fatal flaws" in either the Phase I MIS /

Corridor A Alignment or the “Southern UNC” Alignment. The general consensus of those present was that there will have to be further justification, avoidance, minimization, and mitigation for any future crossing of New Hope Creek. All alignments, including an alignment adjacent to the existing US 15-501 New Hope Creek crossing, will need to be studied during the next phase of the project, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).