

2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Comments on MTP Report

Hi Aaron,

I'd like to share my feedback for the Durham MPO planning processes.

- Prioritize funding to cover infrastructure (sidewalk or otherwise) gaps on pathways to schools and parks. The Safe Routes to Schools and Safe Routes to Parks funding of the past would have provided opportunities to ensure connectivity between neighborhoods and schools/parks, but that ball has been dropped since that funding has dried up.
- Increase collaboration between City, County, and School System(s) to ensure residents and their safe mobility is being prioritized rather than who "owns" the land. It needs to matter less that the road doesn't "belong" to the City or County and there needs to be a system to allow the road to be made safely mobile regardless of ownership.
- Vision Zero principles need to come back to the forefront. Prioritizing walkers, bikers, and those with mobility limitations over vehicles should be at the forefront, not an afterthought in funding and infrastructure design. By prioritizing safe mobility for the most vulnerable road users, we make the roads safer for everyone.
- Increase public engagement throughout planning and implementation processes. As a resident, there have been several projects near my neighborhood and I've not been contacted for my input and I've had challenges finding avenues to share feedback. Durham's Equitable Engagement Blueprint should provide the necessary structure to connect with communities surrounding project areas. And "project areas" should be considered more broad than just the small geographic footprint of the project, especially if we want to encourage multimodal transport.

As a resident of Durham (513 Valleymede Dr) and injury prevention professional, I have a vested interest in the transportation infrastructure of my community. I'm happy to provide any elaboration on my above points if needed.

Thank you!

Tricia Smar

Response: The 2050 MTP invests almost \$3 billion in bicycle and pedestrian projects that will support Safe Routes to School and Vision Zero. The DCHC MPO continues to make improvements to its public engagement process, particularly in terms of equitable engagement. The 2050 MTP process used minority and low-income focus groups, targeted social media announcements and notices in African-American and Latinx newspapers.

Hello,

I would like to provide my comments on this plan, via this email.

<https://durhamnc.gov/civicalerts.aspx?AID=3026>

My observation is that there are a lot of road widening projects included in this plan:

- How will these projects affect the residential neighborhoods that will be directly impacted by a widening project?
- Hayti has previously been negatively impacted by road and highway projects. Are there protections in place that will limit further negative impacts to this community?
- What measures will be taken to monitor and mitigate the increase in air pollution?

Cheek Road is a narrow rural road that has seen an increase in industrial vehicles traveling through. The lack of sidewalks makes this road difficult to navigate, which is problematic for the parents of children attending Merrick-Moore Elementary School located within our community.

- What can be done to limit the ability of large industrial vehicles to travel on this section of the road or any localized rural road?

The voices of those who will be directly impacted by these road improvements need to be included in this process.

be a kind human
Bonita Green

Response: The 2050 MTP has very few road widenings. In cases of road widenings, there will be an in-depth public engagement process as the project goes through the alternatives and design phases. The DCHC MPO continues to support improvements on NC 147 that do not add lanes, right-of-way or structures that further negatively impact the Hayti and other communities along that roadway. Staff referred Ms. Green's Cheek Road concern to City of Durham staff.

Andy,

Thank you for sending us this information yesterday. A few of these projects, including I-40, US 15-501, NC 147, and US 70, specifically the cross-section modifications and/or the removal of control of access, may be negative to the mobility and congestion of the corridors, thus impacting the transportation conformity.

We are unaware of any analysis that has been completed to support or justify these changes. We note that multiple sections of these roadways have V/C ratios of 1.2 and above in 2050. Another issue on NC 147 and US 70 is the mobility implications of the removal of control of access.

Scott and I have discussed this with Jamal, and until there is an analysis that can support these changes, TPD plans to defer any support of these projects.

Julie E. Bogle, PE
NCDOT

Response: The DCHC MPO did not add capacity increases to those roadways because of the MPO goals to minimize climate change and ensure equity. The 2050 MTP is not a process that allows in-depth

demand, capacity and design analysis to be completed for individual roadways. Thus, the DCHC MPO looks forward to participating and working with the NCDOT in the studies that are certain to be conducted in these key transportation corridors.

Hello,

I am not sure how the Metropolitan Transportation Plans translate into individual projects and the maps seem unclear. I have some comments regarding projects that might have been completed by the time frame considered in the report, but they might still be useful.

Politicians are campaigning on addressing climate change and other environmental issues, but then preside over the building of unnecessary and environmentally destructive roads. I have heard claims that building new roads just causes about more car use, so new roads only temporarily reduce congestion and presumably increase carbon dioxide emissions and other air pollution over time. Why was a Glover-Ellis connector considered necessary, and if it was necessary, why was construction allowed to block it? I realize that this document does not include Wake County, but I question why government facilities, etc. were allowed to block the preferred route of the 540 extension, so it was then built in a way that threatened endangered species. How are rare and threatened species doing in southern Wake County following the freeway construction?

I have objections to extending Hopson Road west to Grandale and extending Grandale south. Grandale cuts across Northeast Creek and is surrounded by gameland, resulting in a lot of roadkill as is, and traffic has increased. The Northeast Creek bottomlands are considered significant natural areas by the NC Natural Heritage Program, but the DCHCMPO wants to sacrifice them for redundant roads, possibly benefitting Cary more than Durham. I think the complete paving of Grandale reduced floral diversity along the road and increased use and probably roadkill. Building a new road parallel to Northeast Creek or along other waterways would harm species that regularly migrate between the bottomlands and higher ground, such as many amphibian species, or animals that have to move upland to escape flooding. The area around the bridge is also unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. Scott King Road, soon to be the site of a Durham elementary school, seems even more unsafe, and extending Hopson Road would presumably increase traffic on Scott King. Speeding far above the 25 mph limit is a problem on Sedwick Road in Parkwood, but Sedwick, Green Level Church, and Wake roads already connect 55 and Grandale, and Hopson was extending through RTP to 55 in a way that made it harder to use the Wake Road connection. I don't like the way scenic hills and ridges have been destroyed in the area, for Hopson east of 55 and for fill to create freeways, possibly with tolls, which I also oppose. How much carbon dioxide and siltation of waterways results from leveling hills? Would Grandale be expanded and streetlights added, degrading the surrounding gameland for nocturnal wildlife and possibly driving some species out? Would extending Hopson towards 751 be in a future plan if this goes through?

There is also an obscene amount of roadkill on Highway 98, especially east of Sherron Road, and along Highway 50 to the north in Wake County. There is also a problem on a side road on the north side of 98 extending NE to 50, where even a flock of cedar waxwings was hit on a snowy day. Pets have also been hit. Deeper roadside ditches or fencing might deter some animals and signs could be installed to warn drivers. The speed limit is also a factor.

Roadkill and human fatalities are also problems along 54 from Durham to Chapel Hill. More sidewalks and wide shoulders would be good, though I like the roadside trees.

I also object to the way the DOT indiscriminately sprays vegetation along roads, including on parkland, even spraying trees far from the road and herbaceous plants. Issues with the shoulders and lack of guard rails seem like bigger safety problems along straight Scott King Road than vegetation several feet from the road, beyond a deep stream or ditch. I thought a colony of rare pinxterflower azaleas was safely on public land, but then there was spraying, though not enough to wipe out the local population.

If new roads have to be built, I would like the environment to be given more consideration. Streetlights bordering parkland would be a problem and light pollution harms my view of the night sky in southern Durham. I have monitored the exceptionally abundant and diverse firefly population in a dark area along Grandale for several years as a volunteer with the Firefly Watch program, based in Massachusetts. Would the bridge at Grandale be raised, so that animals might be more likely to go under it and also reducing erosion caused by the constriction of floods? What else could be done to reduce roadkill? Would there be more traffic lights? At times many people park around the bridge and it would be good if the shoulders were more level and wider in places, though I would not want many trees to be cut. It was difficult to get the DOT to pick up wooden shipping pallets, a vector for non-native forest pests and diseases, dumped on the shoulder, even though their mowing equipment was obviously running into them. One of the few benefits of the proposed extensions might be a reduced risk of roadside harassment of people legally using the gamelands and road shoulder, due to the increased traffic, though the traffic would also be detrimental to the use of the gameland.

Thank you for your consideration.

I'm not sure if it was published anywhere, but I sent out a letter to the editor on the Hopson and Grandale road extensions, and the related NC55-Hopson rezoning proposal:

Protect the gamelands along the Durham-Chatham-Wake county line

February 7th the City Council will hold a second hearing on the rezoning of an area extending from east of 55 to within sight of Grandale Road for a research/manufacturing-type "business park," with Hopson Road extended west. Hopson and Grandale extensions are included in Amendment #4 to the DCHCMPO's Comprehensive Transportation Plan, accepting comments through February 22nd (links at northeastcreek.org).

This rural section includes a large area of protected public land. The Northeast Creek bottomlands' significance was recognized by the NC Natural Heritage Program, which recommended the "Preservation of upland buffers" and a moratorium on new utility corridors there.

Despite the parkland, species could still be lost. The rezoning application considers the State gameland only a "buffer." There is no public site plan and industrial light zoning allows many uses. If large

greenhouses are built, reflected light would be obvious for miles, likewise with blasting and traffic noise. What of spills? Hundreds of fireflies of several species glimmer, gathered amphibians roar, and herons, nightjars, and likely turkeys have nested nearby. If hunting ends, will deer overpopulate? I would like consideration for the welfare of this valuable, public land. Additionally, the claypit has paleontological significance. I suspect that rezoning would trigger more land sales, like the boom (of moonscaping) along Ellis.

Durham claims to care about emissions, but plans to level ridges for a redundant road. Nearby roads already seem unsafe and Grandale threatens wildlife, which the government knows. Does the Council need to see the roadkill from a short stretch?

Michael Pollock

Response: Staff responded to Mr. Pollock with the following points. The Hopson Road Extension is not part of the 2050 MTP. The DCHC MPO, however, currently has CTP Amendment #4 out for public comment and it includes changing the Hopson Road Extension from a divided roadway to a non-divided roadway (cross-section 2E), which will reduce the footprint of the roadway. As far as staff understands, the inclusion of the roadway in the CTP has no bearing on whether a business park will be constructed on the site. And, the roadway will only be built if a private concern develops the site. As a result, in the case that the site is developed, the CTP directs the alignment of the resulting roadway as far away from Northeast Creek and the wetlands as possible. The Hopson Road Extension will likely attract trips away from Sedwick Rd., Green Level Church Rd. and Wake Rd.

I agree with you. [Editor's note: Mr. Haithcock sent this short comment in reference to Michael Pollock's comment above.]

Randall Haithcock
