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May 14, 2004

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Mr. Cal Horton  
Town Manager  
Town of Chapel Hill  
306 North Columbia Street  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516

Re: Traffic Analysis Prepared by the Town of Chapel Hill  
Traffic Engineers

Dear Cal:

As you are aware, in conjunction with the Eastern Federal Special Use Permit process, the Town has retained two engineering firms to perform traffic analysis of Village Plaza's surrounding roads. It is my understanding that the second engineering firm, HNTB, was retained to specifically address certain shortfalls in the initial traffic study prepared by RS&H. It has come to my attention that there are serious flaws in the HNTB Amended Traffic Impact Report that undermine the validity of HNTB's overall analysis. Without going into great detail, a few of the critical flaws are as follows:

1. Neither RS&H or HNTB ever actually counted the traffic entering or leaving Driveways C and D. Given the focus that Driveway D has received, I find this omission incredible.
2. By not actually surveying and counting the traffic leaving Driveways C and D, HNTB has made the wrong assumption as to traffic movements leaving Driveway D. HNTB assumes that the majority of traffic leaving Driveway D will make a right hand turn. The actual traffic counts show the exact opposite to be true. This flaw is critical in that a left hand traffic movement, by its very nature is more difficult and creates further delays which in turns lowers the level of service.

3. Approximately 80% of the traffic generated by the theater is erroneously omitted from HNTB's calculation of the level of service. In determining the level of service, HNTB only looked at the increase in traffic generated by the redeveloped theaters. The base calculation did not include the old theater traffic counts. Thus, adding the so-called "increase" to the traffic counts that did not initially include the theater traffic count seriously understated the traffic counts and level of service. Thus, in determining the level of service for key entry points into Village Plaza, HNTB has essentially ignored about 80% of traffic that would be generated by the theaters.
  
4. Finally, the HNTB report analyzes the peak traffic generated by the theater; however, this is only half of the equation, and only focuses on half the problem. HNTB failed to factor in the peak traffic on the adjacent roads. By failing to address the peak traffic times of the adjacent street (i.e., Elliott Road), HNTB's overall traffic analysis is flawed yet again. In particular, the peak traffic on Elliott Road on Friday is 4-6 p.m., and when combined with the theater traffic at this time (albeit not the theater's peak traffic time), ends up making the 4-6 p.m. time frame the overall peak traffic period when the full picture is analyzed. Yet, this time period was not even addressed in the HNTB report.

Given the critical nature the HNTB traffic report will play in the decision making process for the theater project, I believe these errors are serious. The problem is compounded by the "impression of credibility" this report is intended to have in the eyes of the Mayor and the Town Council members. It is my understanding that the Town has set up the procedure of hiring their own traffic engineers so as to provide accurate and impartial results. Given the importance of Driveway D to Crowell Little, Steve Ginn and the patrons of the Village Plaza and Gateway Commons, I believe the HNTB results provides misinformation to the Mayor and Council. I would ask that you please investigate this matter. If there is any further information I can provide, please let me know.