

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mayor and Town Council

**FROM:** W. Calvin Horton, Town Manager

**SUBJECT:** Status of South Columbia Street Improvement Project

**DATE:** October 12, 1998

The attached resolution would endorse the North Carolina Department of Transportation proposed design for improvements on South Columbia Street (N.C. 86) between Manning Drive and Fordham Boulevard.

**BACKGROUND**

Various improvements on South Columbia Street have been considered periodically by the Town and the State since the early 1980's.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) considered funding a project on South Columbia Street in the late 1980's involving four or five traffic lanes.

Following a Public Hearing and Council work session in early 1990, the Town Council decided not to proceed with a project on South Columbia Street because of community objections regarding the extent of the proposed widening and associated impacts on the project corridor.

In the mid-1990's, the Town Council again discussed possible South Columbia Street improvements, and a public forum was held in late 1994.

The Council subsequently adopted a resolution requesting that the State perform a feasibility study for an improvement project involving limited roadway improvements, bikelanes, sidewalks, and transit improvements.

The State did not schedule such a study, and no further design development or studies were undertaken regarding any type of project on South Columbia Street.

On October 13, 1997 the Council adopted a Transportation Project Priority List that placed the improvement of South Columbia Street as a number two priority, with the following description: "Improvement of South Columbia Street from Manning Drive to Fordham Boulevard with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations; minimize right-of-way takings."

On March 20, 1998, Town and University officials met with officials of the NCDOT and our State Transportation Board Member to discuss the possibility of a limited improvement project on South Columbia Street. The State representatives were receptive to the idea.

On April 6, 1998 the Council adopted and forwarded to the State a resolution requesting that the NCDOT design and construct limited improvements on South Columbia Street consisting of two travel lanes with a bike lane and sidewalk along one side. The University provided a concurring letter.

## DISCUSSION

The State has reviewed the Council's request for limited improvements on South Columbia Street, and is in general agreement with the proposal. They suggest two modifications as follows for safety reasons:

- 1.) Increase travel lane widths from eleven feet to twelve feet.
- 2.) Include four foot designated bike lanes on both sides of the roadway (rather than on one side only.)

The attached cross-sections show the preliminary proposal from the Town and University as compared to the State's alternative proposal for improvements on South Columbia Street.

The State has also provided a preliminary alignment plan which indicates that no major realignment of the existing roadway would be necessary. According to the State design engineers, they will not plan to "straighten the road out" but will perform the widening to the extent possible along the existing alignment, within the existing right-of-way, and with the least amount of disruption to adjacent rock walls and properties.

We will not know the exact extent of encroachments onto private property resulting from the proposed project until more detailed construction drawings are prepared and our environmental assessment is completed. However, we do not think that any businesses or residences will require relocation, with the possible exception of the small rental unit on the west side of South Columbia Street across from Chase Avenue.

Please see the attached map illustrating the proposed new construction limits as related to the existing roadway corridor.

## CONCLUSION

We think that the revisions proposed by the State are reasonable, and are made in the spirit of the limited improvement project desired by the Town and University.

Because of the significant curves and grades on South Columbia Street and the mix of car, truck, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic, we believe the wider travel lanes and additional bike lane

provide a reasonable compromise between safety, capacity, multi-use function, and the Council's desire to minimize impacts on adjacent properties.

**MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council adopt the attached resolution endorsing the State's proposed design for South Columbia Street improvements.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Area Map (p. 5)
2. Cross-section Sketches (p.6)
3. Preliminary Alignment Plan (p.7)

**A RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROPOSAL FOR DESIGN OF CERTAIN ROADWAY, DRAINAGE, BIKELANE, AND SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS ON SOUTH COLUMBIA STREET (N.C. 86) BETWEEN MANNING DRIVE AND FORDHAM BOULEVARD (98-10-12/R-2)**

WHEREAS, South Columbia Street between Manning Drive and Fordham Boulevard is a key roadway serving the Town, the University of North Carolina, and the UNC Hospitals; and

WHEREAS, both the Town and the University are interested in having the State construct certain roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and drainage improvements on South Columbia Street to better serve all users of this important transportation corridor; and

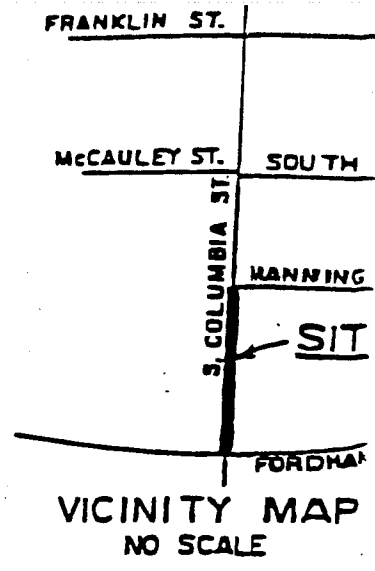
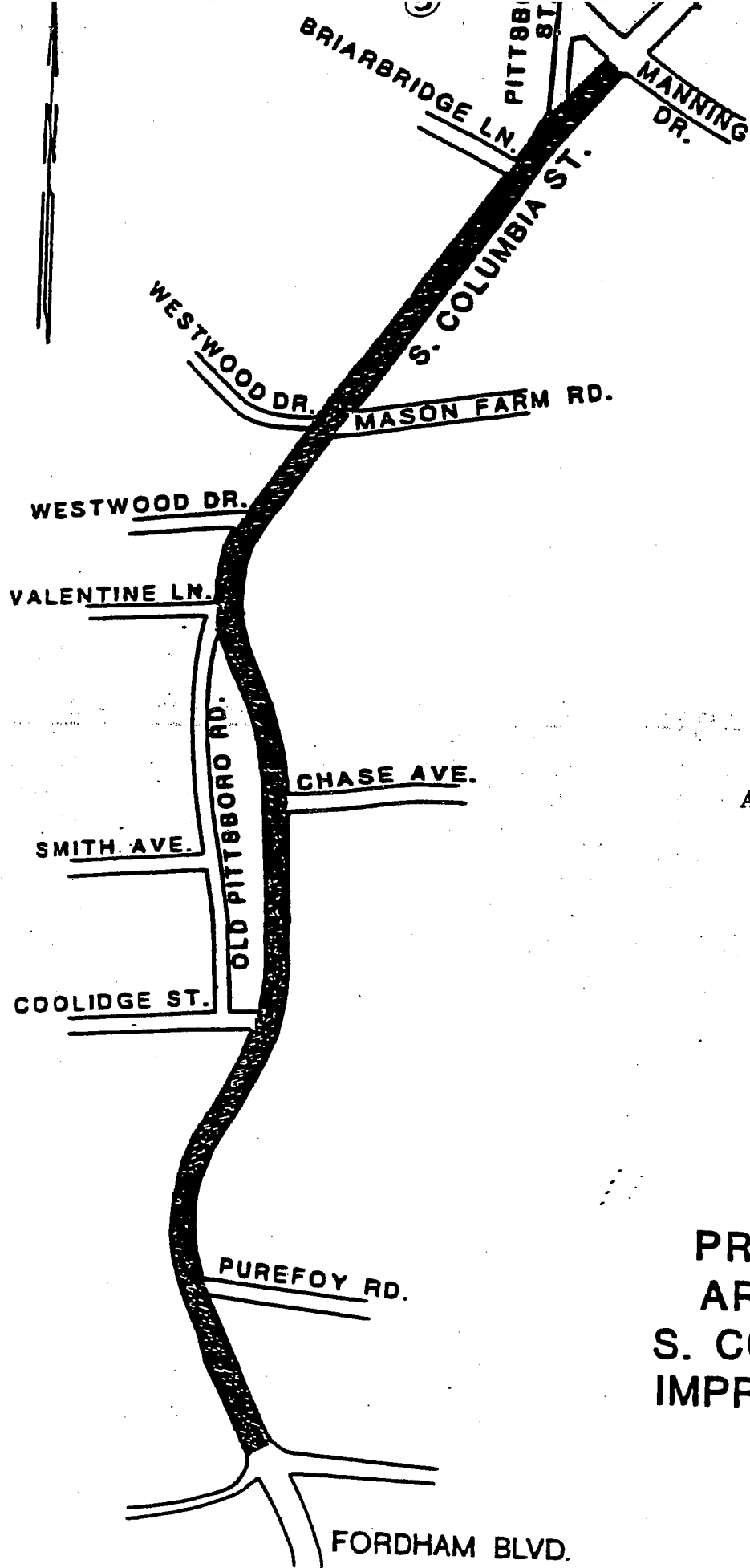
WHEREAS, representatives of both the Town and the University have met with State officials to discuss the desired improvements which would include limited roadway widening; and

WHEREAS, in response to a preliminary design proposal made by the Town and University, the State has proposed a compromise design consisting of two twelve-foot wide travel lanes, two four-foot wide striped bikelanes, curb and gutter along both sides of the roadway, a five-foot wide sidewalk along the east side of the roadway, and associated drainage and intersection improvements as can reasonably be accommodated with minimal disruption of adjacent properties;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council herewith endorses the State's compromise design proposal and requests that the North Carolina Department of Transportation proceed with the design, funding, and construction of the above described improvements on South Columbia Street (N.C. 86) between Manning Drive and Fordham Boulevard.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council authorizes the Town Manager to request that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill endorse the State's proposal in writing.

This the 12<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1998.

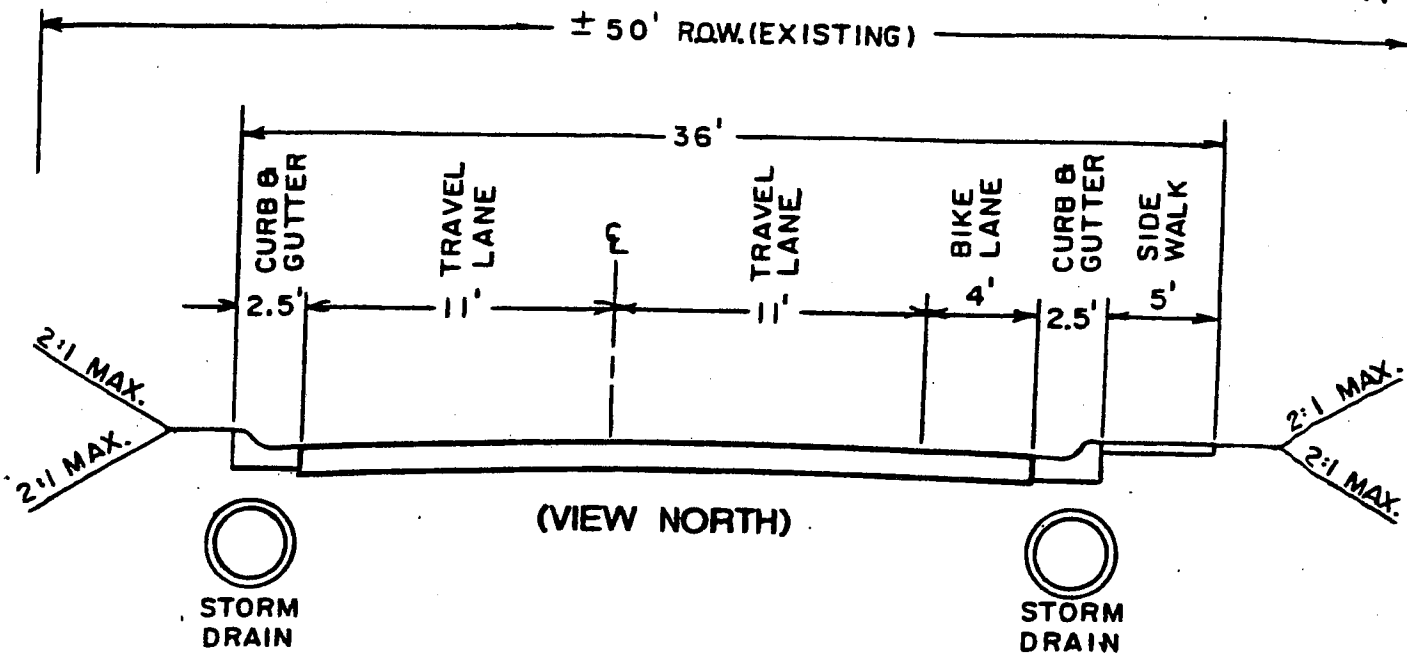


ATTACHMENT 1

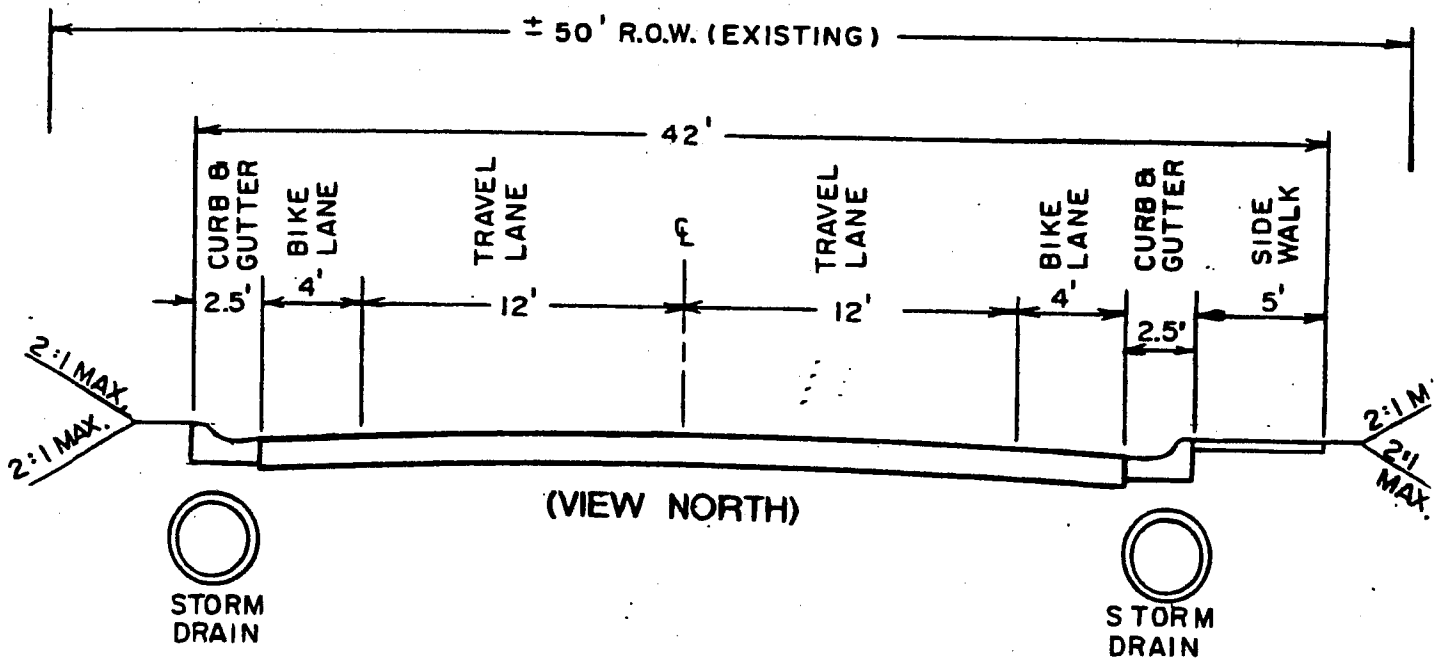
**PROPOSED  
AREA FOR  
S. COLUMBIA ST.  
IMPROVEMENTS**  
NO SCALE

# SOUTH COLUMBIA STREET IMPROVEMENTS

ATTACHMENT 2

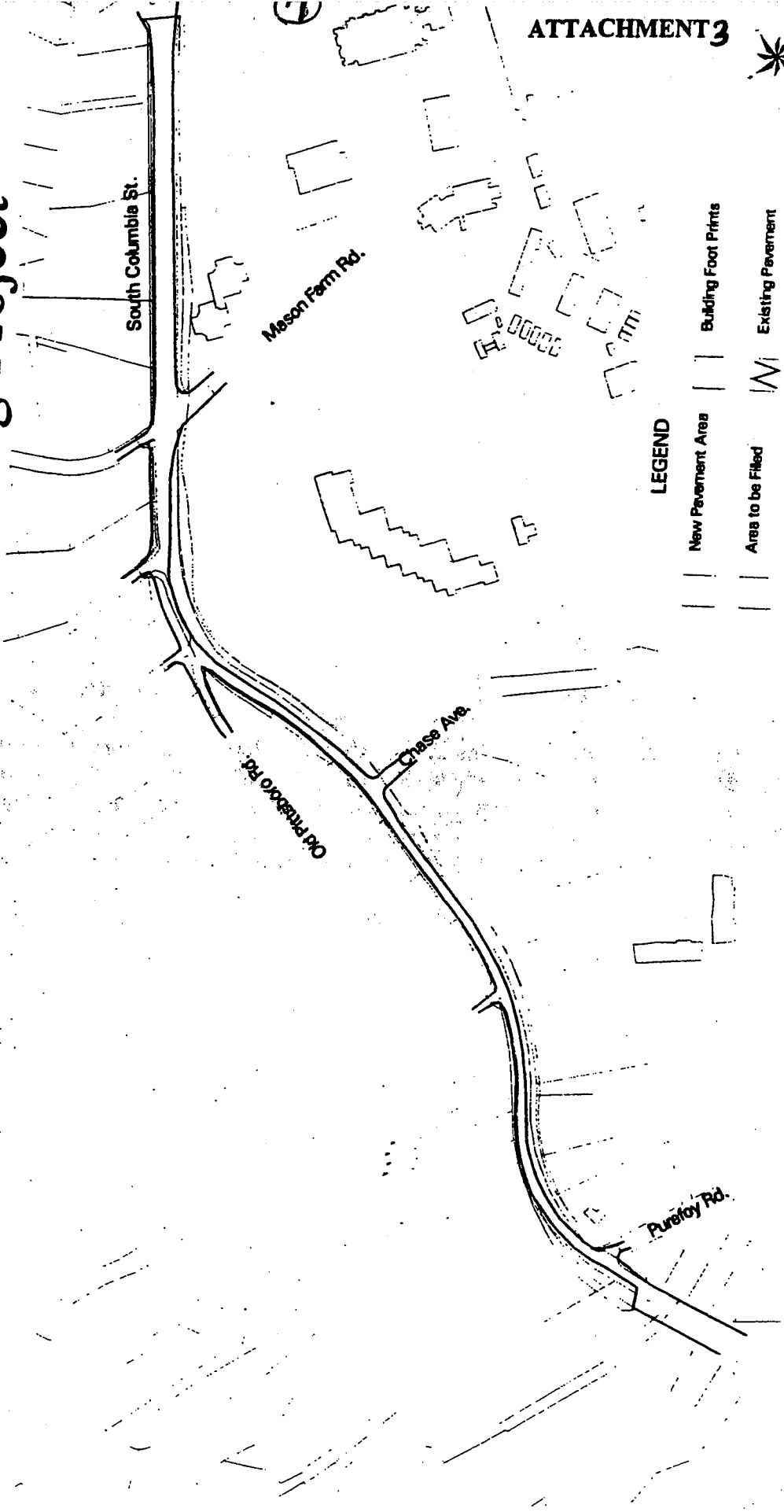


PRELIMINARY TOWN/UNIVERSITY DESIGN PROPOSAL



PRELIMINARY STATE DESIGN PROPOSAL

# South Columbia Street Widening Project



### LEGEND

- New Pavement Area
- Building Foot Prints
- Area to be Filled
- Existing Pavement
- Area to be Cut
- Property Lines

Map Prepared by Chapl Hill GIS - Oct. 1998  
Original Map Prepared by NCDOT - Project U0624