



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

April 19, 2006

Mr. Cal Horton, Town Manager
Town of Chapel Hill
405 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Dear Mr. Horton:

We have completed our investigation of three pedestrian crash locations in the Town of Chapel Hill. Our studies included on-site investigations and a review of crash histories available through the North Carolina Crash Database. Please note many crashes go unreported for a variety of reasons and the database reflects only those crashes reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Concerning the January 23, 2006 pedestrian crash on West Franklin Street, low visibility appears to be one of the contributing factors. The pedestrian was attempting to cross mid-block on West Franklin Street from south to north in an area not designated for pedestrian crossings. The crash occurred after nightfall during a rain event and the pedestrian was wearing dark clothing.

Our on-site investigation revealed West Franklin Street is a four-lane, two-way facility with a posted speed limit of 20 mile per hour. The pavement and pavement markings were noted to be in good condition. Sidewalks are available for pedestrian use on both sides of the street. On-street parking is available and delineated by pavement markings on both sides of the street. Overhead lighting fixtures are installed on both sides of the street.

During the period October 1, 1995 through September 30, 2005, the North Carolina Crash Database revealed two bicycle and two pedestrian related crashes on West Franklin Street between Robeson Street and Kenan Street. Low visibility due to rain events and darkness appears to be a factor in the two other reported pedestrian crashes on West Franklin Street.

During a February 20, 2006 meeting at Town Hall, representatives of the Town of Chapel Hill Engineering Department expressed interest in a mid-block crosswalk and possibly a pedestrian signal on West Franklin Street. We understand Town staff has submitted to

Division Traffic Engineer Vance Barham a request for a signalized mid-block pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of the University of North Carolina Computing Center. Although our studies reveal these countermeasures are not warranted at this time, we have agreed to consider the Town's request. Mr. Barham has asked our office to evaluate and respond to your request.

Regarding the January 23, 2006 crash on US 15-501 at Bennett Road, low visibility also appears to be one of the contributing factors. The pedestrian was attempting to cross US 15-501 against the traffic signal from west to east. The crash occurred after nightfall and the pedestrian was wearing dark clothing.

Our on-site investigation revealed US 15-501 is a four-lane divided facility with a posted speed limit of 45 mile per hour. Bennett Road, a two-lane, two-way secondary road, and Arlen Park Drive, a local street, intersect US 15-501 from the east and west, respectively, to form a four-leg at-grade intersection. The intersection is signalized and provides left turn lanes on all approaches. The pavement and pavement markings were noted to be in good condition. Sidewalks are available for pedestrian use on the west side of the US 15-501 and on both sides of Arlen Park Drive. No overhead intersection lighting was observed. No marked crosswalks or pedestrian signals were observed.

During the period October 1, 1995 through September 30, 2005, the North Carolina Crash Database revealed no bicycle or pedestrian related crashes at or within 150 feet of the intersection.

We concur with the Town's decision to install street lighting in the area. Roadway lighting should positively affect the safety of all road users. The lack of crash history in the 10 years prior to this crash suggests pedestrians are able to safely cross at this intersection. Pedestrian volumes currently do not meet the warrants established in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* for pedestrian signals. Pedestrian signals and marked crosswalks are not recommended at this time.

Concerning the January 25, 2006 pedestrian crash on US 15-501 at Manning Drive, low visibility again appears to be one of the contributing factors. The pedestrian was attempting to cross US 15-501 against the traffic signal from east to west. The crash occurred after nightfall and the pedestrian was wearing dark clothing.

Our on-site investigation revealed US 15-501 is a four-lane divided facility with a posted speed limit of 45 mile per hour. Manning Drive, a four-lane two way secondary road, and a local municipal street intersect US 15-501 from the west and east, respectively, to form a four-leg at-grade intersection. The intersection is signalized and provides left turn lanes on the US 15-501 and Manning Drive approaches. The pavement and pavement markings were noted to be in good condition. Sidewalks are available for pedestrian use on the west side of the Manning Drive and terminate at US 15-501. No overhead

intersection lighting was observed. No marked crosswalks or pedestrian signals were observed.

During the period October 1, 1995 through September 30, 2005, the North Carolina Crash Database revealed no bicycle or pedestrian related crashes at or within 150 feet of the intersection.

We concur with the Town's decisions to install overhead street lighting in the area and to eliminate on-street parking in the neighborhood southeast of the intersection. Enforcement of the no parking ordinances within the neighborhood may be required during University special events. Again, the addition of roadway lighting should benefit all road users. We also recommend a review of special event traffic control planning with the University of North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Pedestrian volumes do not meet warrants established in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* for pedestrian signals. The lack of crash history prior to this crash suggests pedestrians are safely crossing the intersection. Pedestrian signals and marked crosswalks are not recommended at this location at this time.

We will continue to monitor these locations through the Highway Safety Improvement Program. Also, we have also noted the amended Request for Qualifications dated February 17, 2006 in which the Town revised to scope of services to include Town-wide pedestrian safety improvements.

We appreciate your interest in highway safety. Please let me know you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Brian C. Thomas, P.E.
Regional Traffic Safety Engineer

cc: Kevin Lacy, P.E., State Traffic Engineer
Mike Mills, P.E., Division Engineer
Vance Barham, Division Traffic Engineer
Jeff McCracken, UNC Public Safety Deputy Director
✓ George Small, P.E., Town of Chapel Hill Director of Engineering