



Triangle Transit Plan Review Comments

Date: September 11, 2009

Project: UNC Chapel Hill Rizzo Center Phase III Project

Triangle Transit Reviewers:

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In response to requests that were received from David Bonk, Town of Chapel Hill Long Range and Transportation Planning Manager in January, June and August 2009, Triangle Transit staff reviewed conceptual plans for the UNC Chapel Hill Rizzo Center Phase III Project.

The overall goal of these comments is to provide the Town of Chapel Hill with input about potential impacts to the transit corridor adopted by Durham and Chapel Hill and avoid cost increases that might result from planning and development decisions made in advance of the major transit infrastructure investment identified for this corridor in the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization Long Range Transportation Plan. At this point Triangle Transit's comments do not address the project's response to the compact, mixed use, walkable, transit-supportive development standards that are an important component of Meadowmont.

These comments are organized in the sequence in which they have been provided.

First Review: Conceptual Site Concept & Site Plan, dated 12.30.08, reviewed on January 27th.

On January 27, 2009 Triangle Transit staff met with Town of Chapel Hill staff and representatives of the developer to discuss and review initial conceptual plans for the Rizzo Center Phase III. The following summarizes key comments that were made.

- The plan includes separate pedestrian and vehicular access routes, both of which appear to cross the transit corridor at-grade. Grade separated access routes for vehicles and pedestrians are essential. The road should be designed/graded such that it would pass under the guideway. Sidewalk/bikeway access should parallel the road.
- A parking area is located generally north of the development, parallel to the transit corridor. Parking directly adjacent to the transit corridor may be

appropriate however an offset of 15 feet or more should be maintained. This offset is particularly important if this project is developed in the near term because it would reduce the likelihood of impacts to the parking area during construction of the planned transit project.

- Discussion at the meeting included the need for information about Light Rail Transit (LRT) which may be selected for implementation in this transit corridor. As requested Triangle Transit subsequently provided Town staff with design criteria being used for the Norfolk LRT project with the caveat that these criteria should only be used as general guidance since they were not written for the Chapel Hill to Durham fixed guideway transit corridor.

Second Review: Conceptual Plan, (undated) received by Triangle Transit June 12, 2009:

The differences between the current conceptual plans and those dated 12.30.08 appear to include the following changes:

- The building footprint and parking layout have changed;
 - The access road connecting the Phase III project to the large parking area off of Dubose Home Lane has been realigned southward; and
 - No pedestrian path is shown on the drawings.
- While the proposed access road between the existing and proposed centers has been relocated southwest of the initially proposed roadway crossing, there is no indication that this is a grade separated crossing. That may be implied by the topography, but there is insufficient information to make a determination.
 - Given the Town's commitment to preservation of this corridor and to avoid impacts that would increase the expenditure of public funding, a specific commitment to design this roadway (in combination with pedestrian/bicycle access) in a manner that would readily support a grade separation is essential. Prudent stewardship requires that a "wait and see if the major transit investment ever happens" would not be an acceptable approach. It is therefore recommended that a requirement in the plan review/approval process include an appropriate design response to this conflict. For now however a grade separated crossing of the corridor must occur, preferably with the road below the transit corridor.
 - While there are no dimensions, the parking area remains very close to the transit corridor. A minimum 15 foot offset from the edge of the transit corridor is recommended.

Third Review: Site Concept and Development Plan dated 4.8.09, received by Triangle Transit August 13, 2009.

The differences between the current plans dated 4.8.09 and those received and reviewed in August 2009 appear to include the following changes:

- The parking generally north of the buildings has been reconfigured and, along with the access loop road, shifted eastwards away from the transit corridor;
 - Parking southwest of the buildings has been reconfigured and a paved area has been added to the south end of the buildings;
 - The access road parallel to the transit corridor and west of the buildings may be closer to the transit corridor than previously shown; and
 - Arrows delineating walk access times suggest that the roadway and pedestrian access have been combined.
- While the revisions included in these plans may reduce some of the conflicts between the transit corridor and the development, consideration should first be given to relocating the Rizzo Center Phase III project to the west side of the transit corridor. This would remove the need for a design which would support future implementation of a bridge over the vehicular/pedestrian access route; a solution that would otherwise be required if the development occurs as currently proposed.

Developing west of the transit corridor would also provide the opportunity for revised parking and access solutions that could reduce the overall impact of the development on the land. Reductions in the length and complexity of the access road, consolidation of parking and shortening of utility infrastructure should also reduce development costs.

- If relocation of the project to the west side of the transit corridor is not undertaken, then the grading, alignment and other elements of the access road/pedestrian route shall be designed to easily accommodate the future construction of a bridge that would be built as part of the transit project.
- All project improvements will need to maintain a 15 foot offset from the transit corridor.
- Other issues identified in previous comments will also need to be resolved.