

JAN 20, 1978

MINUTES OF A PUBLIC HEARING OF THE BOARDS OF ALDERMEN
OF CARRBORO AND CHAPEL HILL,
CARRBORO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1978

Present were:

- Robert Drakeford, Mayor
- Ernest Patterson
- Nancy White
- Douglas Sharer
- Braxton Foushee
- John Boone
- Sherwood Ward



- Robert Epting, Mayor Pro Tem
- Gerald Cohen
- Jonathan Howes
- Beverly Kawalec
- R. D. Smith
- Edward Vickery
- Bill Thorpe

Mayor Drakeford called the public forum on the thoroughfare plan to order. The meeting was being held to get citizen input and to hear comments on the various aspects of the plan.

Ms. Loewenthal, Carrboro Planning Director, explained the thoroughfare plan is a document which recommends and sets priorities for major road improvements to be required in an urbanized area for a set period of time. The thoroughfare plan is a prerequisite to receiving state funds for the projects. The existing thoroughfare plan for Chapel Hill-Carrboro was adopted in 1965 and revised in 1968. The towns had requested an update and signed a contract with the State Department of Transportation providing for the State to pay 60 percent of the cost of the study and the towns to pay 40 percent. Data gathering and analysis was begun and in September 1975 a draft was submitted to the towns. After comments by Carrboro, Chapel Hill and the University, a final plan was submitted in March 1976.

Mr. Jennings, Chapel Hill Planning Director, outlined the terms and concepts of the plan, and the changes made from the existing plan to the proposed plan. The plan only deals with thoroughfares, those roads which serve the purpose of moving traffic. The proposed plan considers a larger area than the existing plan, going into Durham and Chatham Counties and including Weaver Dairy Road to the north. The connection of Umstead Drive along Bolin Creek to Franklin Street and the Boundary Street connector north had been deleted. The Umstead connector to the north (through Iron Mountain) had been deleted. Instead a north-south radial starting from Greensboro Street to the High School and Sewell School property was being proposed. Hillcrest had been eliminated from the thoroughfare plan. Merritt Mill Extension to the By-pass and outer loop was being deleted. Old Greensboro Road was not included in the proposed revisions. Arboretum Drive was no longer being considered. The Rosemary Street connector with the Franklin Street intercept at Howell Street had been moved to Park Place. The Mason Farm extension to South Columbia and Otey's Road had been replaced by Manning Drive. State-side Drive, Brookview Drive and Honeysuckle Road had been dropped as a portion of the outer loop, and Weaver Dairy Road had been substituted. Boundary Street extension to the south had been deleted and utilization of Park Place, Country Club and Ridge Road connecting with Manning Drive proposed. Columbia Street and Pittsboro Street would be a one-way pair. Raleigh Street and Hillsborough Street were also included in the proposed plan. The plan proposed Rosemary and Franklin Streets as a one-way pair. Mr. Jennings reviewed some of the concerns which had already been discussed at public meetings.

Mr. Ted Parrish, Chairman of the Pine Knolls Community Organization, was opposed to the four-laning of Merritt Mill Road and McCauley Street. The Community Organization had met and made these recommendations: (1) the curve in Merritt Mill straightened out; (2) a park-ride lot for the bus located at the end of Merritt Mill Road; (3) bikeways and sidewalks proposed in the CIP should be implemented; (4) they would support the extension of McCauley Street only if it remained a two-lane highway and a stoplight was placed at the intersection of Merritt Mill Road and Cameron Avenue; and (5) there should be the least amount of removal of housing as possible.

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Mr. William Lindsay said the proposed changes on McCauley Street would demonstrably change the environment. The residents would be compelled to endure noise, congestion and foul air. He did not want the atmosphere of Chapel Hill destroyed.

Mr. Charles Morrow supported Mr. Lindsay's comments on McCauley Street extension. The extension would bring heavy traffic off of N.C. 54 and the By-pass to an already congested area in Chapel Hill. Having more automobiles in town would not be commensurate with the goal of energy conservation. The plan had been drafted before the initiation of the bus system, and would not only work against it but against efforts to encourage pedestrian and bicycle safety. The loss of trees and the widening of streets would reduce land values in the neighborhood.

Mr. Bernard Greenberg stated the east-west corridor was unnecessary. Proper engineering would help existing roads meet the traffic needs.

Mr. Joseph Straley, Director of the Piedmont Energy Project, reminded the audience of the Growth Options Conference held a few years ago. One of the principles resulting from this conference was that a concern should be evidenced with the way activities affected the historic sites and the environment. Mr. Straley, however, spoke with regard to energy problems. Although fuel supplies would not be depleted, they would probably be halved. He disagreed with the assumption of the State that transportation would have a high priority when compared with energy for homes and industry. Mr. Straley did not believe the U.S. would be able to import the oil for its needs because of the trade deficit such a large importation would create. He thought transportation needs would not be met.

Ms. Alice Welsh was concerned that developers were being required to give up property for the thoroughfare plan which might not be used. The town would then lose tax money on this property. She asked that the State have some kind of written policy on controlling this property. Ms. Welsh wanted the towns and the State to revise the plan to reflect factors not being included such as inflation, bus system, greenway system, park-ride lots, and the energy crisis. The plan should begin with a statement of purpose explaining how the plan was arrived at. She questioned the validity of the plan since some of the data was not current. Ms. Welsh requested that the outer loop be moved further east from Colony Woods and be moved up in priority to reduce inner-city traffic.

Mr. Phil Busby agreed with the widening of the By-pass. He asked that bike paths be constructed to reduce traffic and more trees planted instead of being removed to widen streets.

Mr. John Temple, Vice chancellor for Business and Finance for UNC, spoke with regard to the parking and traffic on the campus. He suggested that since data had been gathered for the plan, the University had decided to stabilize the number of students, the bus system had been initiated, and the energy problem had become more acute. He thought the plan should be re-evaluated. The University supported the widening of the 15-501 By-pass and Manning Drive, and Columbia Street from Cameron Avenue to South Road. The University would support construction of an outer loop if it were moved further east out of residential sections and further south out of the land identified by the University for research. The University, however, opposed the extension of Pittsboro Street to Airport Road and its one-way pairing with Columbia Street. These changes would encourage crosstown traffic and campus traffic, conflicting with pedestrian traffic. The University opposed the widening of South Road, and recommend that overpasses or underpasses be given consideration to eliminate some of the conflict between pedestrian and automobile traffic. They opposed the widening of McCauley Street as it would increase traffic on South Road, and objected to any revisions which would increase the traffic on campus. The Boundary Street connector would cut through Battle Park and the area designated by the University for parking. The University supporting the improvements to Highway 54 East.

Mr. Larry Bostian, of the People's Alliance for Progress, opposed the plan. The People's Alliance thought the plan should begin with the goals of minimum disruption of neighborhoods, maximum use of existing streets, and a strong commitment to public transportation and alternative means of transportation.

Mr. Bob Stipe, a member of the Executive Committee of the Chapel Hill Preservation Society, stated that many elements of the thoroughfare plan

would be disruptive. The plan was based on out-of-date assumptions and incomplete data. The Executive Committee thought not enough attention had been given to the impact of the plan and they strongly opposed it, with respect to the National Register of Historic Areas. They opposed those elements of the plan which impacted areas not on the National Register but which the Society felt would qualify for the Register. Adoption of the plan would be disruptive to the property values in those areas and would be a hindrance to the revitalization of the CBD. It would be destructive to the investment in the bus system. The Society questioned the legality of the process by which the plan was developed. They questioned the legality of the expenditure of federal, state and local funds for preparation of the plan. They questioned the legality of the public hearing and any subsequent actions which might be taken. They questioned the legality of the adoption of the plan by the Boards of Aldermen and the Department of Transportation. They questioned the expenditure of public funds to acquire land or rights-of-way to implement the plan or for improvements of certain elements of the system. They felt that many federal, state and local ordinances and statutes might not have been met, and suggested that the Boards of Aldermen and the Department of Transportation determine whether a number of laws had been complied with. Mr. Stipe then listed the laws:

- (1) Section 4F of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and the several federal court decisions interpreting and upholding that act;
- (2) The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Section 106;
- (3) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969;
- (4) The Federal Aid to Highway Act of 1949 as amended;
- (5) the Intergovernmental Coordination Act of 1968 and OMB Circular A95 adopted pursuant to that act;
- (6) Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1964 as amended by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974;
- (7) The Tax Reform Act of 1976, Section 2114;
- (8) Executive Order of May 13, 1971, #11593
- (9) GS 121-12
- (10) GS 113A, Article 9 of the North Carolina Environmental Policy Act;
- (11) GS 136-66.2
- (12) Executive Order #16 of July 1976 by Governor James Holshouser;
- (13) Chapter 6 of the Chapel Hill Code of Ordinances.

The Society requested the deletion of any elements of the plan that would be within 300 yards of any structure, historic district or object presently on or eligible for the National Register of Historic places, particularly Franklin and Rosemary Streets, Hillsborough Street, extension of Cameron Avenue, McCauley Street, Pittsboro Street extension north. They asked that prior to the adoption of the plan, the Chapel Hill Historical Society, the State Historic Preservation Officer, the N.C. Historical Commission, the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation and the National Park Service and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation be consulted.

Mr. Joe Capowski wanted to discourage one person automobile traffic in Chapel Hill, and encourage bussing of commuters, pedestrian and bicycle traffic. He was against further widening of radials into Chapel Hill.

Mr. Bob McMann said the plan would destroy the residential communities. Alternatives to more automobile traffic such as mass transportation and bikes had been ignored in the plan.

Ms. Ann Fields, representing the Chapel Hill League of Women Voters, stated the disruption of neighborhoods by street widening, redirection of traffic would be detrimental to orderly, attractive and humane community development.

Mr. Alan Walker of Walker's Funeral Home, objected to the extension of Pittsboro Street.

Ms. Ruth McLean was opposed to making South Columbia Street a four-lane highway. Exhaust from more traffic in the area would be funneled into a ravine and would be concentrated there.

Mr. Jay Smith urged that the outer loop be shifted to the south and east so that it would not cut through established neighborhoods or through the arboretum.

The representative from Colony Woods objected to the outer loop because it would divide residential and recreational areas. It would follow the streambed which is not considered to be good planning. The construction of Burlington Boulevard would be destructive to the environment, would be a hazard to the school children and would result in double frontage for residents.

Mr. Watts Hill Jr. suggested that the plan be scrapped and a new one drafted which would consider the environment.

Mr. Edward Pearl said the traffic on South Columbia, mostly trucks, was a death trap. He supported Mr. Hill's argument.

Mr. Glenn Orlin helped prepare the plan for DOT. He said that bikeways and other transit systems had been considered. If the plan was adopted, the town did not have to request improvements it did not like.

Mr. Wallace Caughman, representing the Independent Trade Group, stated the plan had been drafted without adequate analysis of its social costs. The plan would make traffic faster, but would attract more congestion. The traffic is only a problem during peak hours, not 24 hours a day. The plan would destroy smaller and older houses. People would be displaced as well as property values lowered. He agreed with Mr. Hill that a new plan should be drawn up in favor of a more conservative approach.

Ms. Priscilla Otto, representing the Carrboro PTA, read a motion passed by that group petitioning for improvements to the intersections of Springfield Street and Shelton Street, Oak Avenue and Greensboro Street, improvement of Poplar Avenue and Elm Street intersection. These intersections were too narrow for negotiation by the school busses. Ms. Otto requested that the improvements to Old Greensboro Road be moved up in priority.

Mr. Dick Lamberton asked that the question of the thoroughfare plan be resolved. The indecision was affecting the property values. If Rosemary and Boundary Streets were widened, the Horace Williams House would have to be moved and its parking lot destroyed. All of the trees along the streets would be destroyed. Some of the old sorority houses would be destroyed and the lots cut so that they would not be buildable. Mr. Lamberton believed that automobile usage would decrease in the future.

Alderman Cohen stated the DOT plan presumed the number of persons per car would decrease, increasing the number of cars. This presumption was based on the growth of population in Chapel Hill of students. However, the University has stated it will not increase enrollment by much, nor will it increase the amount of parking so that students will be using other methods of transportation which are now available. Much of the population growth in Chapel Hill is due to retired people who don't drive during rush hours. He suggested making existing roads safer.

Alderman Smith stated the plan would be destructive to the community. The growth of the N.C. Zoological Park would cause an increase in traffic on N.C. 86 and 15-501 By-pass. Chapel Hill did not want any more traffic; it needed a way to funnel traffic around Chapel Hill.

Mr. Henry Whitfield stated that property values would drop along proposed thoroughfares. He suggested waiting until the State had funds to construct some of the roads before doing all of the planning. Mr. Whitfield suggested the town buy the University's maintenance building on Airport Road and move the University to the south side of town to prevent some of the crosstown traffic.

Ms. Margaret Boley agreed that a new plan should be drawn. She wanted the outer loop further east and south, and objected to four-laning 15-501.

Ms. Eunice Brock recommended the DOT start with the outer loop and base the rest of its planning on how much traffic was then taken out of Chapel Hill.

Mayor Drakeford thanked citizens for coming to the meeting. He announced that consideration of the plan would be put on the agenda for Carrboro's next Board of Aldermen meeting.

As the meeting was a joint meeting of the Carrboro and Chapel Hill Boards of Aldermen, ALDERMAN COHEN MOVED, SECONDED BY ALDERMAN HOWES, THAT THE PLAN BE REFERRED TO THE PLANNING BOARD AND THE TRANSPORTATION BOARD FOR CONSIDERATION AND RECOMMENDATION. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED BY A VOTE OF FIVE TO ONE WITH ALDERMAN SMITH OPPOSING.

The meeting was adjourned.

James C. Wallace

David B. Roberts

