

CHAPEL HILL/CARRBORO THOROUGHFARE PLAN PUBLIC HEARING
CHAPEL HILL HIGH SCHOOL CULTURAL ARTS AUDITORIUM
MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1983, 7:30 P.M.

Mayor Joseph L. Nassif, Mayor of the Town of Chapel Hill, called the meeting to order. Present were:

Chapel Hill Town Councilmembers

Marilyn Boulton
Winston Broadfoot
Jonathan Howes
Beverly Kawalec
David Pasquini
R. D. Smith
Joseph Straley

Carrboro Board of Aldermen

Robert W. Drakeford (Mayor)
Ernie Patterson
John Boone
Steve Rose
Jim White

Chapel Hill Town Councilmember James Wallace was absent, excused. Carrboro Aldermen Hilliard Caldwell, and Joyce Garrett were absent.

Mr. Mike Jennings, Planning Director for the Town of Chapel Hill, stated that the current Thoroughfare Plan (adopted 1968), under which both the Chapel Hill and Carrboro communities operated, was outdated. The proposed Thoroughfare Plan was designed to accommodate traffic expected by the year 2000. Mr. Jennings highlighted the three general areas of the proposal:

East Side: Extension of Estes Drive east to Farrington Road in Durham County to U.S. 15-501; extension of Francis Street from Ephesus Church Road to Willow Drive.

Outer Loop: Beginning at the intersection of U.S. 15-501/Old Durham Road; east on Old Durham Road to Pope Road; south on Pope Road to Ephesus Church Road/Pope Road; south on "new" road to Barbee Chapel Road/N.C. 54; Barbee Chapel Road to Parker Road; Parker Road to Mt. Carmel Church Road; west on "new" road crossing U.S. 15-501; continuing to Smith Level Road; west on "new" road to Old Fayetteville Road/Jones Ferry Road; Old Fayetteville Road past N.C. 54 west and to intersection with old N.C. 86; then on a "new" road to Homestead Road; on Homestead Road to a point east of Rogers Road; continuing on a "new" road to Weaver Dairy Road/N.C. 86; east on Weaver Dairy Road to a "new" road/connector to U.S. 15-501 at Sage Road; Sage Road to Old Durham Road.

Central Area: Plans for this area were designed to alleviate growing congestion problems in the central business areas. An attempt had been made to minimize any disruptive influences of the proposed plan.

1. Needs: (a) Adequate route from the southwestern part of the community to the University of North Carolina and North Carolina Memorial Hospital; (b) reduce traffic/bike conflict between Chapel Hill and Carrboro on Cameron Avenue. Proposal: Redesigning McCauley Street and improve Pittsboro Street and Columbia Street.
2. Needs: Relieve congestion on East Main Street between Rosemary and Weaver. Proposal: Construct 3 lanes from proposed extension of West Franklin Street, along Brewer Lane and Carr Street and to intersection of Main Street/Jones Ferry Road.
3. Needs: Additional traffic-carrying capacity on Columbia Street. Proposal: Extend Pittsboro Street to Airport Road and expand to three lanes. (Interim proposal: Widen (4-lane) Columbia Street.) One-way Columbia/Pittsboro and Franklin/Rosemary.

Mr. Jennings concluded that the initiation of urban projects was the responsibility of local government. Funds for improvements were scarce and it would be

advantageous for both Carrboro and Chapel Hill to adopt a Thoroughfare Plan, making their funding position more competitive. Adoption of a Thoroughfare Plan would provide a framework for decision-making; a plan should be flexible and regularly evaluated.

Ms. Katherine Seaton, President of the New Hope Audubon Society, opposed the extension of Parker Road to Barbee Chapel Road as it would cut across the significant natural area of Mason Farm. It would disrupt the wildlife and water resources in the area. She supported plans located further south.

Mr. Ritchie Bell felt that alternative plans should be considered. The proposed roads would destroy the Mason Farm environmental resources.

Dr. R. Haven Wiley, a 12-year resident and professor of Biology at the University of North Carolina, stated that the Mason Farm land was the University's only facility for teaching field biology, ecology, and natural history. Biological field research would become impossible; management would also become impossible because the diversity of the wildlife would disappear. An alternate route further south should be considered.

Dr. Cliff Parker, a professor in the UNC Biology Department, addressed concerns for the effect the proposed roads (with the resultant flooding) would have on wild and natural resources of the Mason Farm lands. He supported roads further south.

Mr. Ken Meyer, a University Biology graduate student, supported the preservation of land for quality of life as opposed to the sacrifice of land for use by automobiles.

Ms. Annie Lee Broughton stated that the Mason Farm area was the closest and most accessible wildlife area. She opposed the proposed roads through this area.

Mr. Robert Smythe, speaking on behalf of the Research Triangle Group of the Sierra Club, expressed concern that the proposed Parker Road extension through the Mason Farm tract would diminish the significance of the areas open space. He challenged the Boards to consider the cost of losing these natural resources. He proposed that needs be adopted to the area, not the area to our needs; he supported an alternate route to the southeast.

Mr. Ken Moore expressed concerns for the preservation of the Mason Farm preserve and of what remained of the charm and character of Carrboro, Chapel Hill and the University. Sacrifices should be made to enhance the quality of life and should not be made for personal convenience with excessive use of automobiles.

Mr. Barry Margolin, a member of the Executive Committee of the Kings Mill Road Neighborhood Association, proposed that the southern loop be moved further south; he opposed any plans for 6 lanes on the U.S. 15-501 bypass, supporting four lanes of the bypass.

Mr. Preston Schiller, a Carrboro resident, felt that the Thoroughfare Plan should address priorities. He felt that a model of the plans would be helpful. He stated that vehicular traffic through Town could be discouraged by enforcing speed limits, coordinating traffic signals, and providing off-street parking and park/ride lots. He opposed the proposed Franklin Street extension and the widening of Greensboro Street to four lanes until after improvement to the neighborhoods had been completed.

Mr. Jonathan Wahl, a resident of 915 Emory Drive and speaking for 114 people, presented a petition that expressed (1) opposition to the proposed eastern extension of the Thoroughfare Plan, (2) concerns for severe flooding of the fringe areas, and (3) for noise from the U.S. 15-501 bypass. He opposed the construction of a Thoroughfare Plan through a flood plain, and through existing neighborhoods that served no one and had the main purpose of allowing a 4-lane access to an area mall for outsiders.

He stated that he felt that no road should be built on this officially designated environmentally sensitive area at this time nor in the future. The threat of any proposed thoroughfare would have a negative impact on property values and morale of the surrounding areas. The petitioners supported a workable Thoroughfare Plan. Plans should be realistic, with inevitable alternatives that would not hurt the environment.

Ms. Myra Waud, President of the Chapel Hill Board of Realtors, stated that the Board felt that the existing thoroughfare system was not adequate and, if corrected, would affect property values. Citizens were concerned for what would be destroyed as well as for what would be preserved.

Mr. Tom Rothwell complimented the state and city planning groups for their foresight, skill, and hard work that promised the continued use of the planning process for regional and local traffic needs.

Ms. Betty Smith presented a petition of 415 signatures from residents of neighborhoods bordering the U.S. 15-501 bypass. She supported the proposed bypass loop around Chapel Hill as a means of routing traffic around Chapel Hill, not through it. She felt that the proposal invited strip development and an increase in commercial development. She also felt that the property would alter the "village-like quality" of neighborhoods on both sides of the highway, due to noise and litter and traffic and would alter lifestyles of residents. She felt U.S. 15-501 should be recognized as a city street that served the community.

She supported synchronized traffic lights, installing passing and turning lanes at intersections, and construction of bike and pedestrian paths--a lesser cost than that of widening the road and building interchanges.

Mr. Wallace Womble, representing Walker's Funeral Home, opposed the proposed Pittsboro Street extension, as it would come within one foot of the business' carport, within 2 feet of the garage, and would cut the property lot in half, making current service levels to citizens almost impossible. He also felt that this would create a hazard for persons walking from the parking area into the building.

Mr. Chuck Rupkalvis, President of the Parker Road/Laurel Hill Neighborhood Association, stated the Association's objection to the extension of Parker Road. Through traffic could use the proposed I-40 and local roads. He proposed that the south loop be connected to Old Farrington Road, not Parker Road.

Ms. Cary Nailling, a resident of Barbee Chapel Road, played a recording that she had made of barred owls living in the Mason Farm area. Should the Thoroughfare Plan cut through this area, the wildlife habitat would be destroyed for hawks, owls, and bobcats. She opposed the destruction of "productive wildlife habitats for consumptive uses."

Mr. Lightning Brown felt that traffic needs of the town's central area should be met (1) without one-laning, (2) without the destruction of downtown buildings, and (3) without increasing hazards to bicyclists and pedestrians.

Mr. Alan McIntyre supported a workable Thoroughfare Plan. He suggested that alterations to U.S. 15-501 be made more attractive with trees, etc. He proposed four-laning over the current shoulders of U.S. 15-501, better alignment of intersection and improved signaling.

Ms. Gertrude London opposed destruction of the Mason Farm area as it was unique and could never be restored. The road could go other places.

Mr. Charles Morrow felt that proposed changes to the downtown roads would encourage more traffic. He supported the creation of park/ride lots on the west side of town.

Mr. E. E. Yaggy, Jr., of the Orange County Comprehensive Health Center, opposed the western extension of Franklin Street on Brewer Street as it would cut through the parking lot and would cause the clinic to close. He proposed that the plans be moved 50-100 feet.

Ms. Betsy Pringle opposed making Pittsboro Street one-way, preferring to tolerate current congestion than to change the central area and affect the quality of long-established neighborhoods. She opposed plans to widen Estes Drive, as it would create crossing hazards for children attending the two nearby schools. She also opposed destruction of valuable resources by cutting through Mason Farm. Plans should be scaled down to the smaller size that Chapel Hill really was and that Chapel Hill should not attempt to act like a larger town.

Mr. George Coxhead, a businessman, urged the Boards to take the necessary actions to approved this proposed Thoroughfare Plan, with minor modifications that had been suggested at this meeting, so that funds could be obtained from the Department of Transportation to implement improvements.

Mr. Carl Wallace, Director of the Upsilon Chapter of the Kappa Alpha order fraternity (110 W. Cameron Avenue) agreed with the need for a plan, but opposed the extension of Pittsboro Street. He recommended instead that Columbia Street be widened ("south of Cameron Avenue--not north").

Mr. Arthur Marks, a member of the Chapel Hill Historic District Commission, opposed one-way streets in the Central Business District. Downtown Chapel Hill should not be a thoroughfare. It should remain pedestrian-oriented. He opposed the proposed McCauley Street extension. He also expressed concern for potential flooding.

Ms. Alice Gordon yielded the floor to the next speaker.

Mr. James Pendergraft, a Carrboro resident, opposed land acquisition in the Northside and Cane Creek communities.

Mr. Douglas Sharer, 501 W. Poplar Avenue, felt that alternate plans should be studied that would address citizens' concerns that Chapel Hill remain a quiet village. Plans for additional pedestrian access, additional bike facilities, increased support for ride-sharing programs, traffic engineering solutions, signal system improvements, staggered work hours of local businesses, etc. should be major considerations before road construction. Construction considerations should be on an "as needed" basis. He asserted that a good Thoroughfare Plan could protect neighborhoods.

Mr. Gene D'Angelo expressed concerns that flooding would result in the Briarcliff area as a result of continued development in the flood plain. He questioned if any flood plain regulations would be adhered to before the onset of construction of the proposed roadway. He felt that a study was needed to address the positive and negative aspects of such construction and felt that construction should not take place unless it could be proven that the effects on the surrounding areas would be positive.

Mr. John Dippy spoke regarding the northern loop of the Thoroughfare Plan on Weaver Dairy Road. Mr. Dippy stated that he was the Executive Director of the Carol Woods Retirement Community. He supported an alternate route around, not through, this development to preserve the present Chapel Hill lifestyle.

Mr. Joe Capowski, Mr. Norman Block, Mr. Gerry Barrett, Mr. Michael Godfrey, and Mr. Polcaro yielded the floor.

Mr. Gary Saleeby opposed the proposed Pittsboro Street extension.

Mr. Ron Helms yielded the floor to the next speaker.

Dr. B. J. Campbell felt current plans needed to be updated. Maintenance costs of current facilities, that were being used beyond their capacity, could be reduced by construction of adequate roads.

Mr. Eddie Williams stated that he lived on Mt. Carmel Church Road, beyond the proposed Parker Road/Mt. Carmel Church Road intersection. Moving the proposed Thoroughfare Plan roads "further south" would move the plans into his own neighborhood. He commended the planners on the proposal and stated that plans were necessary to address traffic problems of the University and North Carolina Memorial Hospital. Increasing the lanes of U.S. 15-501 did not necessarily mean that it had to become commercially developed.

Mr. W. L. Wiley, a Chapel Hill resident since 1925, opposed the extension of McCauley Street and the remodeling of Pittsboro Street. He felt that over the years the University had "lost ground" in planning of the area due to the demands of automobiles. He supported preserving the area around the University.

Mr. Leonard Van Ness stated that the Chamber of Commerce formally endorsed the proposed Thoroughfare Plan in January of 1983.

Mr. William Lindsay felt that the proposed Thoroughfare Plan would destroy the Chapel Hill environment.

Mr. Joe Herzenberg yielded the floor to the next speaker.

Mr. Roger Baker stated that citizens had expressed concern that the Town officials and planners would do something, whereas his concern was that they would not do something. Thirty years of past traffic planning had not brought significant results. There was a need for "trade-offs"---sacrifices had to be made for the common good. Councils had to "make the hard decisions...now...and take the responsibility."

Ms. Nadia Carrell felt that biking residents would have to find other means of transportation if U.S. 15-501 were turned into four lanes. She advocated using Pittsboro Street for bikes and pedestrians. There was a need for more fringe parking.

Mr. Robert Bryan yielded the floor.

Mr. Mike Vandenburg, President of the University of North Carolina student body, stated that the disadvantages of the proposal far outweighed the advantages. He opposed the Parker Road extension through the Mason Farm area, due to the harmful effects on the natural resources. In addition, he opposed the Pittsboro Road extension because the effect on area fraternity houses (the proposed road would go through one fraternity house, "clip" two and go behind a few others.

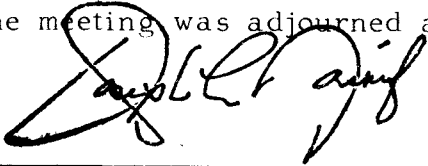
Ms. Eleanor Kinnaird felt the plan showed lack of logic in several areas. She felt that the outlying areas of Chapel Hill would be experiencing population growth, not the Central Business District. She opposed 6-laning the U.S. 15-501 bypass.

Mr. Jay Bryan opposed increasing the size of roads, as it would just bring in more traffic. He felt the proposed widening of Greensboro Street, the extension of Franklin Street and the widening of Estes Drive would destroy the "village-like" quality of Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

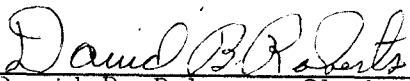
Mr. Noah Chatham stated that he had observed the Mason Farm tract recently and discovered its natural beauty. He supported the preservation of this land.

Mayor Nassif expressed appreciation for citizen participation in this meeting. He assured those present that both Boards would give these expressed concerns their attention. Notice would be given re future meetings on this issue.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 P.M.



Joseph L. Nassif, Mayor



David B. Roberts, Clerk