

Traffic Separation Study Public Hearing
Written Comments Submitted by October 15, 2013

From: Owen Evans
Sent: Wednesday, October 02, 2013 1:05 PM
To: Stepney, Sandra A
Subject: Durham Traffic Separation

Hello Sandra

I am reviewing the traffic separation study and I have one long comment.

I notice that no big changes are planned at Duke or Gregson streets and basically Chapel Hill street is planned to be cleaned up. I see that some Duke Street grade separation alternatives were considered and rejected. I can see why they were rejected since the impacts would be atrocious.

I also see that Blackwell, Mangum, and Roxboro were considered as a single project. It looks like Blackwell and Mangum will be lowered by a few feet, and the railroad raised the rest of the way over all three streets. By considering all three crossings together, you got a better solution, so I commend you on that approach.

However, I am curious why that approach was not extended further west to also include Chapel Hill, Duke, and Gregson? This would fix all six "problem" crossings downtown in one fell swoop. Chapel Hill and Gregson both have severely restricted underpasses with 12' or less of clearance, while Duke Street is a very busy grade crossing.

The railroad currently descends gradually going east from Buchanan. My suggestion is to modify the railroad so that, instead of descending, it maintains its elevation at about 410 feet, until the end of the platforms at the Durham Amtrak Station. Gradually descend from there to an elevation of 406 feet at Blackwell street, and from there, assume the profile already proposed in the Blackwell-Mangum-Roxboro long term alternative.

This yields about 8' additional clearance over Gregson, which would be enough for a modern ballasted-deck bridge, plus plenty of extra clearance to remove all height restrictions.

The railroad would also be 10' above the current elevation of Duke, so that Duke would have to be lowered much less, perhaps 12', instead of the far more disruptive 22'+ proposed in the eliminated alternative where the railroad remains at its current elevation. The sidewalks would need to be lowered even less, perhaps 4', which would further reduce the impact to nearby buildings and businesses.

The railroad would be 10' higher over Chapel Hill, which, likewise to Duke, would be more than enough to eliminate all height restrictions plus replace the old open deck structure with a modern ballasted one.

This would increase the cost of an already expensive project. Not only would it be longer, the Amtrak platforms would also need to be rebuilt at the new elevation, and phasing would need to be managed to minimize impacts to Amtrak service. But it also completely solves the

connectivity and safety issues associated with the railroad tracks in downtown Durham, which I think would be a worthwhile benefit.

Thank you.
Owen Evans

From: Janet Martell
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2013 7:24 PM
To: Natalie Spring
Cc: Scott Harmon; Stepney, Sandra A; ABCD
Subject: Re: [ABCDdurham] [pac5] Draft Durham Traffic Separation Study (TSS)

It seems to me that livability and human-scale architecture friendly to people is being sacrificed to "safety" and a landscape designed for efficient vehicle traffic. Ugh. I have sent comments before, and will do so again.

Jan Martell
Resident, Cleveland St.

From: Natalie Spring
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2013 4:23 PM
To: Scott Harmon; Stepney, Sandra A
Cc: ABCD
Subject: Re: [ABCDdurham] FW: [pac5] Draft Durham Traffic Separation Study (TSS)

I had a chance to look through some sections of the report and am rather upset that they are proposing to close the Dillard St crossing.

The specific plan is to build a "decorative fence or wall" between the eastern edge of Downtown Durham at this crossing and the explosive growth at ATC. You'd think with the new courthouse sitting on Dillard St as well as the Health Department located on Dillard St. and ATC/DPAC bringing in so many folks they would want to IMPROVE connectivity in this area.

Neighbors weighed in during the study repeatedly saying they did not want this crossing closed. This is documented in the study.

Natalie Spring

From: Dan Welch
Sent: Friday, October 04, 2013 1:32 PM
To: Stepney, Sandra A
Subject:

Hello Sandra,

I am a resident of the Old West Durham neighborhood and live a short distance from where two of the railroad grade separation overpasses were proposed for future construction. I understand the two overpasses at Swift Avenue and 15th Street are no longer under consideration and I am just writing to say THANK YOU for dropping these from consideration. They would have greatly degraded our cycling and pedestrian connectivity and these eyesores would have greatly reduced the desirability of living in this neighborhood.

Our thanks go out to DOT for listening to local residents and making the right decision.

Dan

Dan Welch PE CEM
Welch Energy Services
(919)810-2532
www.welchenergyservices.com

From: Gisele Hamm
Sent: Sunday, October 13, 2013 7:36 AM
To: Stepney, Sandra A
Subject: traffic separation

Hello Sandra

I have several problems with the proposal for Glover Rd. First, the East End connector is already in the works. Putting an interchange at Glover Rd and extending Glover to 70 and beyond is duplicating the project. I'm very concerned about the traffic. I live on the corner of Glover and Crafton. Where we pull out onto Glover there is limited sight because of the hill. I know of one fatality in front of my house and I fear that increased traffic, in a hurry to get to 147, would create a dangerous situation. Then there is the cost. I think there is a much more cost effective alternative.

Close the crossing at Glover. Improve and extend existing roads North to Ellis and South to Wrenn. Put a bridge or underpass at Wrenn Rd where there is room to do so. There is no need for the interchange at 147.

My suggestions would greatly reduce costs. Traffic concerns would be addressed with very little inconvenience to local traffic. Waste Management would have direct access to Angier Ave. saving them money and us traffic.

Please have someone investigate this alternative.

Thank You

Kenneth S. Hamm
2802 Glover Rd.
Durham NC 27703

From: John Schelp
Sent: Friday, October 04, 2013 8:46 AM
To: Stepney, Sandra A
Subject: Thank you for removing overpasses at Swift & at 15th

Dear Ms. Stepney,

I write in support of removing the elevated overpasses at Swift and at 15th from your list of proposals for Durham rail crossing.

This was a good decision. Durham has more dangerous intersections. Creating costly clover-leaf dead zones on the edge of Duke University, Ninth Street and Duke Hospital would have been overkill.

Thanks for listening to the community.

With best wishes,

John Schelp
Durham, NC

-----Original Message-----

From: Galia Goodman
Sent: Friday, October 04, 2013 11:40 AM
To: Stepney, Sandra A
Subject: Overpasses

Thanks for removing the overpass option. We really were not at all excited about that!

best- Galia Goodman, WHHN neighbor and OWD friend

Galia Goodman

Ms. Sandra Stepney,

I do not expect I can change what has been decided by your study, but is it possible some funds can be made available to cure a hazard at the Ellis Road RR crossing?

I live at: 1735 Stage Road Durham, NC 27703

I frequently travel to the Durham Freeway over a severe RR crossing on Ellis Road.

Ellis was substantially improved, but still has no shoulders. Reflective stripes and reflectors were added after I alerted the Dept. of Transportation to the many vehicles that ran off the road into the ditch especially in the rain. The new traffic lights help as well.

I could not believe so much would be spent for improvements without raising the grade for 50' on both sides of the RR to eliminate the hump at the crossing. It is my judgment this would not have impacted the crossing itself as you mentioned.

The crossing is a hazard as strangers, traveling at normal speed in the dark, can easily leave the ground. There are no warning signs. When I brought this to the attention of the DOT I was told it was too late and there were plans to elevate the road over the RR sometime in the future. How could that get missed in the planning for the recent improvements?

I remember the traffic study that involved tubes across the road to monitor the traffic count. Did the study have the sophistication of also including the slow speed of the traffic and delays due to the school and train schedules?

The Ellis Road bridge over the RR must be far into the future as it is not in this announcement. As these changes are well into the future, can something be done sooner?

The cost of raising the grade 50' before and after the crossing to match the elevation of the tracks on Ellis Road is obviously not a great expense compared to what may ultimately be done. It would also be an improvement in the heavy traffic flow during the morning and evening rush hours due to the school and those taking a short cut between the Durham Freeway and Route 70.

In the mornings, West bound traffic backs up and interferes with traffic on Miami. The school has been helpful by having someone direct traffic in the mornings, but the problem is severe.

A traffic study of the school entrance may show extra lanes are also needed across the tracks. That would of course necessitate big changes in the crossing gates etc.

Do all of these needed changes have to wait for the ultimate improvements?

There is also heavy traffic during these periods on Stage Road by drivers trying to avoid the Miami/Ellis intersection.

Ernest Miles

In a message dated 3/11/2013 11:17:23 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, nhorne@ncdot.gov writes:

Mr. Miles,

Thank you for your phone call clarifying that the crossing you are concerned with is the Ellis East crossing. As I explained the long range alternative at this location is for a grade separation over the railroad. Current projections also call for an additional passenger/freight rail and two regional rail tracks all located within the existing railroad right of way. The proposal also does straighten out the existing curve in the roadway and relocates the grade separation to the north of the existing crossing.

This study is to determine recommendations to move forward with as a rail plan for this area. The alternative at these locations are currently unfunded and many including the Ellis east grade separation are designated as long term projects. This study is the first step to identify possible projects and prioritize them for future funding opportunities when they come available. Once funding is identified each project will have to go through a design and environmental document stage, prior to construction.

It is my understanding from our conversation that the pavement between the tracks and within 6 feet of the track is in need of repair. We will forward this concern onto the railroad.

Thank you again,

Nancy

From: Horne, Nancy M
Sent: Monday, March 11, 2013 10:28 AM
To: 'ErnieMiles@aol.com'
Cc: Stepney, Sandra A; Pullen, Jahmal M; wesley.parham@durhamnc.gov;
Mark.Ahrendsen@durhamnc.gov; Matthew.West@kimley-horn.com; Teresa.Gresham@kimley-horn.com
Subject: Durham TSS - Rail Crossings

Dear Mr. Miles,

We appreciate your interest in our study. As you are aware there are three upcoming meetings, each with a focus on a particular segment of the project. These meetings are informal drop in sessions with no formal presentations. We will have the materials for the entire study at each of the meetings and be able to accommodate comments and questions for each segment at all three meetings. Since you are unable to attend the meeting on the 21st, please feel free to attend the meetings on either the 18th or 19th. We highly recommend attendance at the meetings as members of the stakeholders and the design team will be present to answer your questions.

The person you spoke with last year was correct in that any adjustment to the railroad tracks or within the railroad right of way would have to involve the cooperation and coordination with the

railroad. In the case of the Ellis Road crossing, these types of improvements are complicated by the number of tracks, the close proximity to the rail yard and the adjacent roadway intersections. I will forward on your comments to the study team.

If you have any other questions please feel free to call me at (919) 715-3686.

Thank you,

Nancy

From: Ernie Miles
Sent: Thursday, March 07, 2013 5:02 PM
To: Stepney, Sandra A
Subject: Rail Crossings

Not sure I can attend the 3/21/13 session as I work part time at Lowe's.

When the improvements were made on Ellis more than a year ago, I could not believe they did not raise the grade on both sides of the rail crossing to make it level after all of these years of it being a big bump/hump in the road.

I called NCDOT after the work was done on Ellis and someone said it could not be done at this time as it required the cooperation of the RR. How else can it be done? The RR does not raise or lower rails so the road has to be changed as a way of making it a level crossing.

There are literally a thousand cars that travel on Ellis night and morning and have to slow down below 20 to make a safe crossing for kids and stuff in the car that can be harmed by the jolt.

Strangers approaching in the dark, unaware of the bump, can actually leave the ground at the 45 mph speed limit.

Many months ago I complained about the poor visibility on Ellis at night and especially in the rain. Cars head lights blind East bound cars due to the slight hill on the West side of the crossing. As there was no lines or shoulder on the road, cars were running off into the ditch on the East side of the crossing.

Now I wish to compliment NCDOT on the work that was done on Ellis to improve it by adding street lights, painted traffic lines and reflectors.

Thanks for reading down this far. I welcome your reply.

Ernie Miles, (xIBM'er know it all, and former Delaware Highway Inspector (1957))

1735 Stage Road

Durham NC 27703

Hello all,

I am sending along a quick note of thanks for the good you all have done to date on the Durham Traffic Separation Study.

I was very critical of the earlier version presented to the public, but this latest version has answered most, if not all, of my critiques. I appreciate your efforts in compiling and presenting all of the methodology and 'front end' information, as well as the revisions that eliminated the large ramps in my neighborhood.

Thanks again,

Eric Heidt.