



September 29, 2023

Deniz Aydemir, Chair  
Durham Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission  
Durham Transportation Department  
101 City Hall Plaza  
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Mr. Aydemir,

I received your letter dated September 19, 2023 concerning the Fayetteville St. bicycle and pedestrian improvements between E. Main St. and E. Umstead St. As your letter notes, the City of Durham secured federal funds from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program to construct northbound and southbound bicycle lanes as well as pedestrian improvements at the intersection of Fayetteville and Lakewood. As you note, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) recently notified the City of Durham that this segment of the CMAQ project could not proceed due to concerns about traffic congestion. The other segments of the project, totaling 7.5 miles, including a recently completed segment on Cornwallis Rd., a state-maintained roadway, are proceeding. Because Fayetteville St. is owned and maintained by NCDOT, any improvements must be approved by NCDOT.

City Transportation staff reviewed the project history with NCDOT staff and there seems to have been a misunderstanding about the need for additional information to secure approval. NCDOT shared that approval would require a revised and updated traffic analysis, and that this analysis should use a 20-year future traffic forecast utilizing annual growth rates of 1.0%. Based on a preliminary review of the data, City staff expect that this assumption will result in an analysis showing that the roadway will be too congested to replace a motorized travel lane with bicycle lanes for the entirety of the project limits. My direction to staff is that conducting such an analysis would not be an effective use of our resources, so we have elected to accept NCDOT's determination that these improvements are not permissible. While it may be possible through additional analysis to implement segments of the bicycle lanes within the project area, this would leave critical gaps and be inconsistent with the City's interest in providing a connected bicycle network. As your letter notes, this project has been in development since 2018 and removal of this location from the CMAQ project is a significant setback in the City's efforts to improve multimodal safety and connectivity.

I have directed City Transportation staff to identify opportunities to advance the pedestrian safety improvements at Fayetteville and Lakewood by other means. In the current configuration, only two of the four legs of the intersection have crosswalks, and pedestrian signals and leading pedestrian intervals were to have been installed as part of the CMAQ project. This will require development of new plans to be submitted to NCDOT for approval, even though the pedestrian improvements will have no significant impact on congestion, because any change to the existing roadway configuration requires NCDOT approval. As a result, implementation of pedestrian safety improvements at this location that were previously anticipated to be underway now will be delayed until sometime in 2024 or later.

Despite this setback, City staff continue to work in partnership with NCDOT to make multimodal connectivity and safety improvements on state-maintained roadways in the City of Durham. This partnership produced commendable results on last year's Erwin Rd. resurfacing project and the City is currently procuring engineering services to take advantage of opportunities presented by NCDOT's 2024 resurfacing plans. We look forward to successful collaboration with NCDOT on future efforts.

The City Transportation Department remains committed to providing safe and equitable access for all users, with special attention to the needs of vulnerable users such as pedestrians and cyclists.

Sincerely,

*Sean C. Egan*  
Sean C. Egan  
Director of Transportation

CC: Elaine M. O'Neal, Mayor, City of Durham  
John E. Sandor, PE NCDOT District Engineer  
Brandon Jones, PE NCDOT Division Engineer  
Javiera Caballero, Durham City Council  
Heidi Carter, Durham Board of County Commissioners