

May 4, 2020

To: Durham County Board of Commissioners

From: Aaron Cain, Planning Manager, Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO

Re: Material Changes to the Durham County Transit Plan and Comment on the Draft FY21 Durham Work Plan

**Summary.** As part of the appropriations process for the Durham County Transit Plan (Transit Plan), an annual Work Plan is developed which produces a budget and selects projects for funding for the upcoming year. A draft FY21 Durham Transit Work Plan is attached for your review and comment.

During the development of the FY21 Work Plan, several items were proposed by transit providers in Durham County that will substantially increase the budgets of those projects, or that are new projects, than was envisaged when the Transit Plan was adopted in 2017. Funding is available for these projects because of the discontinuation of Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) in March 2019. Per the interlocal agreement (ILA) that governs the Transit Plan, expenditure increases of more than \$500,000 on bus services are considered “material changes” and must be approved by all three governing boards of the ILA.

The projects that are deemed to be material changes are:

- Transit Emphasis Corridors (TECs) for:
  - Fayetteville Street – expansion of scope and budget
  - Chapel Hill Road – expansion of scope and budget
  - Holloway Street – expansion of budget
- Bus Stop Access Improvements – new project
- Bus Speed and Reliability – new project
- Electric Vehicle Acquisition – new project
- GoDurham CAD/AVL – new project

The DCHC MPO Board will review this request on May 13. The GoTriangle Board of Trustees will review this request at its May or June meeting.

**Background.** Each year, Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) staff, in conjunction with staff from Durham County, the City of Durham, and GoTriangle, develop a Durham Transit Work Plan (Work Plan) which identifies the projects and funding from the Durham Transit Tax for the upcoming fiscal year. A draft FY21 Work Plan has been developed and released for public comment. It is available for public comment until May 22, 2020. Staff welcomes any comment the commissioners have regarding the draft FY21 Work Plan. The Work Plan will go before the GoTriangle Board of Trustees in June for approval as part of its budget process.

In 2013, the Durham County Board of Commissioners, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO), and GoTriangle adopted an ILA to govern procedures for amending the Bus and Rail Investment Plan, which was originally adopted in 2011. In 2017, a new Durham County Transit Plan was

adopted, and the ILA procedures extended to the new Transit Plan. The ILA stipulates that a change of more than \$500,000 to bus services is considered a material change, and therefore must be approved by all three parties to the ILA.

Several items are considered material changes because of the amount of funding increase that is requested in the FY21 Work Plan. All of these funding requests have been deemed to be within budget in FY21 due to the discontinuation of D-O LRT. The FY21 Work Plan was released for public comment by the Staff Work Group (SWG) on April 15, 2020. A short description of each project is given below, and the project sheet for each project is attached.

**Transit Emphasis Corridors**— a Transit Emphasis Corridor (TEC) is a set of infrastructure improvements to provide additional amenities to transit riders, upgrade pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities to improve access to transit, and roadway construction to improve the reliability of transit vehicles. The 2017 Plan only budgeted \$2.6M for TECs. However, in order to fully realize the benefits that TECs can provide to transit users and providers, as well as address increasing costs of pedestrian infrastructure, the amount requested by the City of Durham, on behalf of GoDurham, is significant.

- Fayetteville Street – expand the scope to include Lakewood Avenue to Riddle Road. The budget will increase to a total of \$10.78M, \$2M of which will be budgeted in FY21;
- Chapel Hill Road – this project will be constructed in two phases. Phase one will construct sidewalks, bus stop improvements, and crosswalks from Morehead Avenue to Bivins Street. Phase two will correspond with the 15-minute frequency route of GoDurham Route 10/10B from Durham Station to Shannon Road. The total request is \$11.9M, with \$790,250 of that to be budgeted in FY21;
- Holloway Street – this project is also to be constructed in two phases, with phase one installing sidewalks, bus stop improvements, and crosswalks from Guthrie Avenue to Raynor Street, where it will tie in to the improvements being made at the Village Transit Center. Phase two will correspond with the 15-minute frequency route of GoDurham Route 3/3B/3C from Durham Station to the Village Transit Center. The improvements will be on Liberty, Elizabeth, Holloway, and Raynor. The total request is \$12M, with \$1.66M budgeted in FY21.

**Bus Stop Access Improvements** – this project is complementary to the bus stop improvements being managed by GoTriangle. This project will enhance the pedestrian infrastructure around the improved stops to increase access, such as filling in sidewalk gaps, crosswalks, signals, and signage. \$125,000 was approved in FY20 for design, \$1,125,000 is requested in FY21 for construction.

**Bus Speed and Reliability** – this project will identify locations where buses experience delays, slow travel speeds, safety concerns, conflicts with other vehicles or infrastructure, and construct treatments to improve bus speed and reliability. In FY20, \$500,000 was provided to conduct reviews and design improvements. In FY21, \$1.5M is requested to implement the improvements, such as signage, pavement markings, flexible delineator posts, or equipment needed for vehicles, traffic signals, or other infrastructure to enable improved bus performance. Efforts will be coordinated with other projects such as transit emphasis corridor planning, roadway resurfacing, transit center improvements, access to transit for pedestrians and other users, and other vehicle and roadway projects related to bus service in Durham and for related project management and administration expenses.

Electric Vehicle Acquisition - in anticipation of the update to the Durham County Transit Plan, additional expansion vehicles will be needed to provide new peak service. Purchase of electric buses is the preferred option because the City of Durham adopted a resolution endorsing the development of a fundable action plan toward a road map to carbon neutrality in City operations by 2040. The proposed vehicles will be deployed to new service to address crowded trips on the GoDurham system that reduce comfort, speed, and reliability of the system. Ordering in FY21 will ensure vehicles are delivered and additional charging infrastructure is in place upon implementation of expanded service. The 2017 Plan only proposed the purchase of one vehicle for GoDurham since buses were to be redeployed and complementary to light rail service. However, with the discontinuation of D-O LRT in the immediate future local bus service will be the primary form of transit. Approximately \$3.2M has been requested for this project.

GoDurham CAD/AVL – this project will cover the one-time cost associated with the purchase and installation of Computer-Aided Dispatch/Automated Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) technology for GoDurham buses. The project request aligns with the recommendations of the Regional Technology Plan, which was developed by the regional partners to ensure that they would optimize future technology investments. GoDurham has requested \$1.5M for this project.

**Issues.** These projects would add approximately \$39.3M in spending over the next several years on bus services and capital from the Durham Transit Tax Fund. This amount could affect the availability of funding for other major capital investments in the next 2-4 years. No particular project, if any, has been identified. Any major capital projects will come from the development of a new Transit Plan.

Development of the new Transit Plan will begin this summer. Initial community engagement for the new Transit Plan has shown a desire for improved bus service in Durham; further engagement is required to receive more specific input.

**Alternatives.** The Board of County Commissioners could choose not to approve the material change for any or all of the projects discussed in this memo. The Board of County Commissioners could choose not to provide any comments on the draft FY21 Durham Transit Work Plan.

**Transit Plan Update.** A firm has been selected to develop the new Transit Plan. A team consisting of DCHC MPO, County, City, and GoTriangle staff selected Kimley-Horn and Associates (KHA), with NelsonNygaard, Public Participation Partners, and Pritchett Steinbeck Group, to put together the new Transit Plan. Two contracts with DCHC MPO are going through the approval process now. An initial contract is to draft a public engagement plan, and also provide support for the next round of public engagement. A second contract, which will require the approval of the Durham City Council, will be for the remainder of services to develop the plan, as well as perform a Comprehensive Operations Assessment for GoDurham, as well as identification of service standards going forward for GoDurham. The total amount of funding for these contracts is approximately \$724,000.

MPO, Transportation, City-County Planning, Neighborhood Improvement Services, and GoTriangle staff are reviewing the input from the initial Listening and Learning sessions as part of the ENGAGEDurham process. While in-person engagement is on hold, staff on using the input from the first round of sessions to prepare for

the next round when it is feasible to do so. This input will be shared with the KHA team as the foundation for the development of the new Plan.

**Contact.** Aaron Cain, Planning Manager, DCHC MPO, 919-560-4366 x36443, [aaron.cain@durhamnc.gov](mailto:aaron.cain@durhamnc.gov)

**Attachments.**

Draft FY21 Durham Transit Work Plan  
Resolution Approving Material Change Requests