

## **RACE & EQUITY POCKET QUESTIONS**

**Title & Purpose of this Initiative:** The purpose of this agenda item is to adopt a Capital Project Ordinance for the construction of three signalized pedestrian activated crossings along NC 54 (TIP# BL-0044).

**Department:** Planning and Finance

**What are the Racial and Equity impacts?** BIPOC populations are more likely to face barriers to accessing reliable transportation. Chapel Hill Transit operates fare free transit service throughout the Chapel Hill-Carrboro community, including the numerous multi-family housing complexes along the NC 54 corridor; but crossing NC 54 is dangerous, particularly at night. The 2019 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Study recommended new signalized crossings at these three locations along the corridor that align with high ridership bus stops. It should be noted that the apartments along the North side of NC 54 are located within a qualified census tract (QCT); the median income is \$57,479 (more than 50% of the households in this area make less than the median income for Carrboro \$76,599). The installation of three pedestrian activated signals at the entrances of Westbrook Drive, Abbey Lane/ Royal Park Apartments, and the Kingwoods and Laurel Ridge apartments, will significantly improve safety at those locations, where residents regularly cross NC 54 to access bus stops.

**Who is or will experience community burden?**

Residents living in close proximity to the signals may experience noise and inconveniences during construction. Access to driveways may be restricted during certain times. Access to the existing bus shelters may be modified. Transit riders and transit drivers may have to adjust the stop location slightly to avoid the construction zone. Access to the shoulder may be impacted for motor vehicles. The total project cost is more than \$1.5 million dollars, and includes funds from state and federal sources. The Town of Carrboro has funding earmarked in the Orange County Transit Plan to cover its portion of the project, so there will be no financial burden for Town residents.

**Who is or will experience community benefit?** Signals will significantly improve the safety at these three locations for residents crossing NC 54 to access transit service. The project includes the construction of a center pedestrian refuge island. Users will cross one side of the street with the signal to the pedestrian refuge island and then cross the other side of the street. Abbey Lane and Westbrook Drive will connect to the future Morgan Creek Greenway providing an off-road bike/ped facility to access University Lake and Carrboro High School. Over time, the Morgan Creek Greenway system in Carrboro-Chapel Hill will become a significant off-road bike/ped facility providing residents with better access to transit stops, schools, a larger greenway system, and a real opportunity to get to destinations by foot or by bicycle, scooter or wheelchair without having to maneuver among vehicular traffic.

**What are the root causes of inequity?** Working individuals and families may find it difficult to attend public meetings when transportation projects are discussed. Structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to transportation, as well as residents' personal experiences with government, can further contribute to a reticence by historically marginalized people to speak in a public setting.

**What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?** The installation of signals does not eliminate the possibility of a safety hazard at the crossing point. Drivers and pedestrians will need to remain alert and pedestrians will need to wait for the signal to change before beginning to cross. It is possible at some residents, particularly children may become overly confident that all drivers will stop and run or walk into the roadway before it is safe.

**How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?** The Town could arrange for a ribbon cutting event with the Town of Chapel Hill and NCDOT with a demonstration of how to use the new signals. Written materials in English and Spanish with images of the pedestrian activation sequence and procedure for crossing the highway could be posted on apartment bulletin boards and shared via management and Nextdoor. The three crossings included in this project were identified in the 2019 NC 54 Safety Study due to the high ridership of the transit stops and number of pedestrians crossing NC 54 (<https://www.carrboronc.gov/722/Transit>). As funding becomes available, the Town will seek other opportunities to collaborate with NCDOT to install additional crossings along the corridor as recommended in reports <https://www.carrboronc.gov/719/Transportation>.