

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Supplemental Agreement and Capital Project Ordinance Amendment for the South Greensboro Street Sidewalk. The purpose of this item to request that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to execute a supplemental agreement with NCDOT for the South Greensboro Street Sidewalk and to approve an amendment to the CIP ordinance to increase funding, extend the project scope and milestones.

Department: Planning and Finance.

What are the racial and equity impacts?

This is an administrative step in the design process for the South Greensboro Street Sidewalk to add funding to the project, expand the project boundaries and scope in order to include the resurfacing work and to update the project schedule. Of note, federally funded projects require a 20-percent local match, which may take local funds away from other priorities. Bicycle and pedestrian transportation projects provide residents with improved infrastructure and by extension transportation choices. For those without a car, a sidewalk or paved bicycle facility can significantly improve everyday life. BIPOC populations are more likely to face barriers to accessing reliable transportation and live in communities with limited access to bike-ped facilities for recreation.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Drivers will likely experience delays accessing South Greensboro Street to get to and from the downtown area and may occasionally need to use detours to reach their destinations, particularly during the resurfacing process. The delays may negatively impact local businesses such as restaurants serving lunch; but this inconvenience will only occur during construction. Property owners and residents living along the corridor will likewise experience noise and reduced access to their homes during construction. Landowners along the west side of the street may lose some of their road frontage to temporary or permanent easements to provide space to construct the sidewalk and/or associated stormwater features. Residents along the corridor may experience additional pedestrians walking in front of their homes. Cyclists will still need to walk their bikes up/down the hill on the sidewalk or use one of the alternative routes—Old Pittsboro Road or Purple Leaf/the Roberson Bike Path.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Once completed, the sidewalk will connect the neighborhoods along Smith Level Road to downtown Carrboro, including the future library at 203 South Greensboro Street. It will complete a significant segment of pedestrian infrastructure along a main north-south corridor in Carrboro, connecting West Carr Street to Carrboro High School. Overtime, the sidewalk will provide a connection to the Morgan Creek Greenway in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, a major off-road investment extending east-west along Morgan Creek, adding a significant segment to the bike/ped network and allowing for more multimodal transportation choices, particularly for households in the QCT, of which more than 15% have no access to a car. Of note, the resurfacing work will include a restriping project for the southern portion of the corridor and will add new bike lanes from the roundabout to the Smith Level Road bridge..

What are the root causes of inequity?

Structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to land use and transportation projects. Working individuals and families may find it difficult to learn about transportation projects in time to have meaningful input and/or to attend meetings when transportation projects are being discussed. Personal experiences with government can contribute to reluctance by historically marginalized people to speak in a public setting, particularly if there is a concern that personal property may be taken/condemned.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

Transportation infrastructure projects can benefit or harm land values and quality of life experiences for surrounding property owners and occupants. As noted above, some property owners along the corridor may lose some of their frontage along the corridor and/or experience a loss of privacy from increased pedestrian traffic. Overall, however, the completion of this project should be of great benefit to Town residents and provide a much safer way to walk or roll along South Greensboro Street.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

Public outreach before and during the construction process will be an important part of keeping residents apprised of the project and when noise is anticipated, and when residents may have restricted access to South Greensboro Street and/or individual homes.