



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 14-0137, **Version:** 1

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### **TITLE:**

Update of the List of Preferred Projects for the Use of Sales Tax Revenues to Enhance Access to Transit

**PURPOSE:** The Board is asked to endorse an update of its list of priority projects for which half-cent sales tax revenues for transit access improvements will be sought. The modification adds the Morgan Creek Greenway as a priority to supplement the S. Greensboro St. sidewalk and modifies the timing and scope of the request of funds for Estes Dr. improvements.

**DEPARTMENT:** Planning

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** Jeff Brubaker - 918-7329

### **INFORMATION:**

*Summary of changes the Board is asked to endorse*

- Staff is authorized to request that the Morgan Creek Greenway be added as a bus capital project priority, to which half-cent sales tax revenues may be applied.
- Staff is authorized to request that the SWG modify the Estes Dr. project implementation details to include a transit access/corridor study with implementation occurring in future years.

### *Explanation*

On September 17, 2013, the Board of Aldermen adopted a resolution establishing the following prioritization of capital projects to which sales tax revenues authorized for transit improvements, approved by Orange County voters on November 6, 2012, and allocated according to the Orange County Bus and Rail Investment Plan (OCBRIP), may be applied:

- a. South Greensboro Street
- b. Estes Extension
- c. West Main Street
- d. Old Fayetteville Road

The resolution came after review by advisory boards. The TAB and Planning Board made recommendations on August 22 and September 5, 2013, respectively.

In accordance with the resolution, Town staff have communicated with Chapel Hill Transit staff and the OCBRIP Staff Working Group (SWG) - composed of staff from Triangle Transit, Chapel Hill Transit, Orange County, and the MPO - on the funding amounts and implementation schedule for these projects. The SWG is developing OCBRIP amendments to be considered for approval by the respective governing boards of Triangle Transit, Orange County, and the MPO. This includes an updated schedule of FY15 (and future fiscal years')

allocations to the Durham-Orange LRT project, bus service expansion allocations to transit providers, the Hillsborough Train Station project, the MLK bus improvement project, and other priorities enumerated in the OCBRIP. The process for reviewing OCBRIP implementation progress, and updating the plan, is governed by an interlocal implementation agreement.

One of the funding priorities is enhancing transit stops and access to them (“bus capital” improvements - used interchangeably in this abstract with “half-cent sales tax revenues”, unless otherwise noted). The SWG seeks to fund an array of such improvements submitted by Orange County transit providers and municipalities, but also is encouraging them to identify other funding sources that can be combined with half-cent sales tax revenues.

At the present time, the total cost of submitted bus capital projects is slightly over \$7 million. The total amount of funding expected to be available via the OCBRIP until its horizon is \$7.2 million. The most recent assumption from the SWG is that \$513,000 will be available in FY15. This assumes a 54%/8%/34% local/state/federal split.

The Board has made it a priority to begin a project to build a sidewalk on S. Greensboro St., and has adopted a resolution (1-28-2014) prioritizing FY15-16 STP-DA Local Discretionary funds for that project. The Morgan Creek Greenway project is at the 90 percent plan stage of the preliminary engineering phase, with construction expected to begin later this year. Both projects complement each other, would be geographically contiguous, and together complement NCDOT TIP Project U-2803, Smith Level Road, to provide remarkable improvements in bicycle and pedestrian transportation options to neighborhoods in the southern part of Carrboro.

The most recent engineer’s estimate provided by Coulter Jewell Thames indicates a total cost of Morgan Creek Phases 1 and 2 to be \$1,135,000, including contingency. The Town estimates that construction engineering will cost an additional \$147,750. With this in mind, and incorporating existing preliminary engineering costs and current federal STP-DA and local revenues, staff estimate that there is a funding shortage of \$919,224 to fully build the project from Smith Level Rd. to the Chapel Hill Tennis Club/Weatherhill Pointe.

To address this funding gap, the Town has requested allocation of STP-DA Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian funding. The MPO included its federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) suballocation in this category. Since TAP funds must be awarded via a competitive process, the MPO evaluated all Regional Bike-Ped requests from members. The Morgan Creek Greenway request received the highest score and is recommended by MPO staff for funding. An allocation of \$730,876, combined with a local match of \$188,348, would address the funding gap. (The local portion also matches a small additional STP-DA allocation approved by the MPO in 2013 of \$22,516.)

Half-cent sales tax revenues are identified as a viable funding source for the identified local match. The Morgan Creek Greenway not only connects with the S. Greensboro St. sidewalk but also enhances neighborhood access to the Chapel Hill Transit J, D, and JN Saturday routes.

Staff also indicated to CHT and the SWG priorities b) through d). However, no federal funds have been identified for these projects. Although the Estes Dr. project was submitted for prioritization in the current STIP process, it is uncertain - and probably unlikely - that it will make it as a funded project on the STIP. The projected cost of adding both sidewalks and bike lanes to Estes Dr. is approximately \$1.2 million. Therefore this single project would use up a substantial portion of all half-cent sales tax bus capital revenues if funded 100 percent locally. With this in mind, staff would like to seek the Board’s endorsement to proceed first with a transit access/corridor study in FY16, with improvements scheduled for future years when funding and corridor

issues have been better explored.

With this in mind, the following is a summary of the changes the Board is asked to endorse:

- Staff is authorized to request that the Morgan Creek Greenway be added as a bus capital project priority, to which half-cent sales tax revenues may be applied.
- Staff is authorized to request that the SWG modify the Estes Dr. project implementation details to include a transit access/corridor study with implementation of improvements occurring in future years.

**FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT:** The ultimate fiscal impact of the modifications would include:

- \* Identification of a local matching revenue source to address the funding gap for Morgan Creek Greenway Phases 1 and 2;
- \* Change in the schedule, and possibly the amount, of half-cent sales tax revenues that could be used for transit access improvements on Estes Dr. It should be reiterated that, due to the cost of these improvements, it is unlikely that the bus capital allocation would be suitable to fund 100% without substantially impairing bus capital needs of transit providers and Orange County jurisdictions.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommend that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution in Attachment A.