



Legislation Text

File #: 17-277, **Version:** 1

TITLE:

Update on the Status of Transportation Projects - Merritt Mill/Franklin/East Main/Brewer (TIP #U-5847)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Board with an update on the status of the intersection improvement project with a focus on possible designs and anticipated timelines for moving forward.

DEPARTMENT: Planning

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INFORMATION: Conceptual intersection improvements for the five-way intersection at Merritt Mill Road, Franklin Street, East Main Street and Brewer Lane, recommended as part of the 2005 Downtown Circulation Study, were programmed for funding in the 2016-2025 STIP with an anticipated timeline of construction occurring in FY2019. The project which crosses the jurisdictional line between Carrboro and Chapel Hill has proven challenging, due in part to the skewed alignment of the existing road network and in part due to its categorization as a highway project with an intended focus on improving vehicular level of service (LOS).

The Board of Aldermen has received updates on the project on May 10, 2016 and June 6, 2017. On August 29th, elected officials and staff from Carrboro and Chapel Hill met with NCDOT to review the status of the project, to discuss aspects of the different design scenarios that seemed problematic and to convey a shared interest in improving facilities for bike-ped as well as for cars and transit. The proposal for a five-way roundabout (or “beanabout”) was noted as one of the designs that seemed to achieve some vehicular LOS improvement, but the need for right-of-way acquisition was not insignificant and enhancements for bike-ped users were minimal. Potential costs for bike-ped improvements for this project have yet to be determined but, for highway projects in general, such costs are typically assigned to the local jurisdiction as a cost share or match.

At the close of the August meeting, a representative from the NCDOT Board noted a possibility of another federal funding source that might be available for use toward the bike-ped improvements in the project. Town staff also shared a “back of an envelope” sketch of potential bike-ped facilities--extending curbs to reduce crossing distances and adding pavement markings to better define crosswalks--that would improve the bike-ped experience, and clarify the appropriate path for all users traveling through the intersection. NCDOT staff is researching the federal funding option as well as the development of schematic designs showing the suggested bike-ped improvements.

Subsequently, at the September 13th DCHC-MPO Board meeting, NCDOT staff recommended submitting the same intersection improvement location as a bike-ped project for scoring in the P5.0 process. If the bike-ped version scored well, it would provide the towns with an opportunity to compare project scopes and determine the most appropriate improvement for the location, while keeping a version of the original highway project on

track. In response to this suggestion, a bike-ped version of intersection improvements at the Merritt Mill/Franklin/East Main/Brewer Lane project was included in the approved list of P5.0 projects to be submitted to NCDOT for formal scoring in the prioritization process for the FY2020-2029 STIP.

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT: No fiscal impacts are associated with receiving the project update.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board consider the resolution provided (Attachment A) receiving the update and offering any additional input for staff to convey to NCDOT regarding this project.