TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL
MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY PLAN

DRAFT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STEWART
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE INVOLVED IN THE MAKING OF THIS PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA: A GUIDING DOCUMENT FOR TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS AND CHOICES FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE GREATER COMMUNITY.

THESE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDE, AND ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

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<th>TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL</th>
<th>OUTREACH PARTNERS</th>
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<td>David Bonk</td>
<td>Carrboro Bicycle Coalition</td>
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<td>Kayla Siebel</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Chapel Hill offers one of the most robust transportation systems in the State, with a walkable downtown, free public transit, a greenway trail network, numerous bike facilities, and plans for future light rail underway. Considering the multimodal nature of the system, the Chapel Hill Mobility and Connectivity Plan (“Mobility Plan”) expands the vision for the transportation and recreation with a focus on non-motorized travel and transit. Based on its numerous plans and considerable public input, the Mobility Plan identifies the next phase of priorities for creating strong bicycle and pedestrian connections between key destinations within the Town and region.

This plan examines the feasibility and implementation strategy of a toolbox of pedestrian, shared-use, and bicycle facility types for use in Chapel Hill’s transportation network. **The aim is to increase the combined bicycle, pedestrian, and transit mode share by creating an integrated transportation system with improved comfort and convenient choices for all citizens and visitors of Chapel Hill, NC.**
**Vision, Objectives, & Goal**

**Objective #1**
**Integrate System**
Expand and link walking, bicycling, and shared-use networks, and enhance connections to transit.

**Objective #2**
**Reduce Stress**
Create an environment where people of all ages and abilities feel safe and independently mobile.

**Objective #3**
**Remove Barriers**
Improve crossings between networks and to destinations, and integrate land use development.

**Objective #4**
**Offer Choices**
Foster options that are comfortable, affordable and efficient for residents and visitors.

**Vision** – Chapel Hill is a community where bicycling, walking, and taking transit are safe and convenient, everyday choices.

**Goal** – To achieve a combined 35% bike/walk/transit commute mode share in Chapel Hill by 2025.
The Mobility Plan considers existing and proposed improvements in Town plans, development agreements, and staff recommendations to find opportunities to improve bicycle and pedestrian mobility. Two rounds of public outreach activities, including public meetings, pop-up events, and surveys, helped gain information about preferences and priorities through over 850 submitted comments. Chapel Hill citizens and business owners identified many of the improvements needed to increase neighborhood walkability, connectivity, and safety. Common concerns cited through the process were the lack of adequate sidewalks, paths, bike lanes, and safe crossing facilities.

**Mobility On Major Street Corridors**

The Chapel Hill 2020 Comprehensive Plan calls for “a comprehensive transportation system that provides everyone safe and reasonable access to all the community offers.” Several key corridors—Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, E Franklin Street, US 15/501 Fordham Boulevard/Durham-Chapel Hill Boulevard, US 15-501 South, and NC 54 Raleigh Road—facilitate most of the auto-centric mobility of today’s Chapel Hill. Improvements could enhance non-motorized transportation in tandem with public
transit to create true “Complete Streets” in the long-term that serve both the citizens and development located on these key corridors.

All five of these corridors are NCDOT-maintained, therefore comprehensive improvements may only come in the long-term through major widening or transit projects. The short-term focus on these corridors will be to implement projects that can improve conditions for residents walking and biking, particularly through enhancements above the curb and at crossings.

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<th>Corridor</th>
<th>Short-term Recommendations</th>
<th>Long-Term Recommendations</th>
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| Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard | • Improve pedestrian facilities by filling sidewalk gaps, increasing sidewalk width and buffer, adding pedestrian crossings, and key connectors  
• Improve bike lane and markings at major intersections | • Implement center-running bus rapid transit in dedicated lanes with stations at select intersections  
• Install buffered bike lanes  
• Improve sidewalks to 6’ minimum offset by 8’ planting strip |
| US 15/501 Fordham Boulevard/Durham-Chapel Hill Boulevard | • Implement multiuse paths along Fordham Boulevard through NCDOT, Town and redevelopment projects | • Implement center-running bus rapid transit in dedicated lanes with stations at select intersections  
• Construct pedestrian overpass bridge at Legion Road extension |
| East Franklin Street          | • Reallocate lanes in road diet project to three lanes with bike lanes west of Estes Dr., and five lanes with bike lanes east of Estes Dr. | • Install 12’ multiuse trail on north side from Booker Creek to Bolin Creek  
• Construct grade-separated underpass at Booker Creek with bridge crossing over Booker Creek to south |
| US 15/501 South               | • Install multi-use path along Obey Creek frontage  
• Improve bike lane and markings at Mt. Carmel Church/Culbreth intersection  
• Construct greenway connector from Mt. Carmel Church Road to Fan Branch Trail | • Eliminate plan for buffered bike lanes along US 15/501 south of Fordham Boulevard in favor of parallel, separate bike facilities with greenway linkages |
| NC 54 Raleigh Road            | • Install signalized pedestrian crossings at NC 54 ramps, Meadowmont Lane/Friday Center Dr. and Barbee Chapel Rd.  
• Install uphill climbing lane and downhill sharrows from Ridge Road to Fordham Boulevard  
• Establish greenway connections into and through Battle Park | • Implement multiuse path from Hamilton Rd to Quail Hill Ct and multiuse trail/cycle track from Quail Hill Ct. to Ridge Rd  
• Improve pedestrian connections across Fordham Blvd. with mid-block crossing or conversion of NC 54 interchange to diverging diamond  
• Extend Town greenway system east along NC 54 to connect to regional greenways |
**DEVELOPING PRIORITY NON-MOTORIZED CORRIDORS**

While the five previously discussed corridors primarily serve motor vehicles, no similar system exists for non-motorized transportation in Chapel Hill. Such a system can be developed if the Town were to prioritize and knit together its numerous greenways, multi-use paths, and neighborhood sidewalks and bikeways. Hearing public comments about being less auto-dependent and having a greater range of transportation options available, a network of six priority bike/ped corridors was created where Town residents could use local street and trail connections to access and travel to major destinations throughout Chapel Hill, as well as access the greater Triangle greenway and bike network. These corridors would serve alternative low-stress, parallel routes to the key motorized corridors:
• **Timberlyne Trail** connecting Downtown Chapel Hill to North MLK/I-40 focus area;
• **Treelyne Trail** connecting North MLK/I-40 focus area to the Ephesus-Fordham District;
• **Midlyne Trail** connecting South MLK focus area to the Ephesus Fordham District;
• **Eastern Explorer Trail** connecting Downtown to Ephesus Fordham and Durham;
• **Cross Cities Connector** connecting Downtown to Raleigh Road focus area and Durham; and
• **Southern Circuit Trail** connecting the South US 15/501 area to the Raleigh Road area.

As priority corridors, projects along these six routes would be given favored status for funding, with consideration of how individual projects would contribute to completion of a corridor and the greater network. These routes for the first time take a broader view where the pathways can be a mix of facilities and contexts, including:

• **On-street greenway connectors** that prioritize non-motorized travel and provide low stress, easy-to-use connections between greenways using neighborhood streets;
• **Newly proposed grade-separated crossings** that provide pathways over/under barriers (i.e. Proposed 15-501 overpasses);
• **Paved connectors/paths** to link neighborhoods to the bicycle and pedestrian network or greenways; and
• **Connections to the regional greenway system** that provide Chapel Hill residents recreational and commuter options within the Triangle region.

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**Bike Boxes at Key Intersections**

**Advisory Lanes to Calm Traffic**

**Uphill Bicycle Climbing Lanes**

**Green Paint at Conflict Areas**
**Enhancing Pedestrian & Cycling Facilities**

With the requirements put in place by Chapel Hill’s Land Use Management Ordinance and new Design Manual and Standard Details, public and private development projects are required to provide pedestrian access to all sites and buildings as well as sidewalks on both sides of every street. The Mobility Plan reviewed the programs and policies affecting pedestrian facilities and activities in the Town, and highlights four key recommendations aimed at improving walkability:

- **Revisions to the sidewalk prioritization criteria** used to rank the Town sidewalk projects, giving additional points to complete projects within focus areas and priority corridors;
- Updates to the land use ordinance to require short paved connectors in cul-de-sac style or limited connectivity developments;
- New guidance on sidewalk connectivity with different types of transit; and
- Plan elements that contribute to transition planning for the Americans with Disabilities Act.

While the Town’s Bicycle Plan is also prescriptive on requirements for facilities with new development and road projects, the separated or buffered bikeways in the plan come with a much greater price tag than the bike lanes or sharrows that were commonplace before. Add to that demand for bike share programs, requests for bike parking, and additional amenities, and elected officials are asking more and more how these investments will benefit their communities beyond just providing recreational facilities and higher quality of life.

The Mobility Plan provides new or enhanced recommendations in the Bike Plan on policies, programs, and facility types:

- Recommendations for a comprehensive bike parking program, including standards for transit stations and proposed revisions to the development code;
- Implementation of a bike share program with consideration of regional systems;
- Use of new and enhanced facility types including green pavement marking, bike boxes, and bike signals; and,
- Location-specific recommendations including shared use paths along US 15-501 South around the Obey Creek Development, a cycle track on West Cameron Ave, and redesign of the Merritt Mill Rd intersection.

![Diagram of bike parking and transit connections](image)
BROADENING THE CULTURE AND MINDSET

As important as the engineering and planning is in creating a multimodal system, cultivating a culture and mindset attracts and encourages residents who want transportation options and expect the Town to provide them. A commitment to all modes and all users must also be embraced by municipal staff and officials. Chapel Hill possesses that spirit already, and it can be seen through the vision and objectives of the 2020 Community Plan, the Bicycle Plan, regional transit planning efforts, and development standards.

In order to further grow the Town’s the commitment to walking, biking and transit, four key initiatives are proposed:

- Development of mobility performance measures that to promote informed decision-making by relating community goals to measurable effects that can be evaluated to assess the effects of proposed projects and policies on the community;
- Establishment of a continuous bike/ped count program to gather data on the non-motorized transportation system, estimate the impacts and benefits of projects, and inform future capital and program investments;
- NACTO membership as an affiliate community to support and participate in the development of nationwide innovative design practices for urban streets and bikeways; and,
- Creation of a Town Mobility Coordinator position to focus on the coordination between bicycle, pedestrian, greenway, and transit accessibility issues.