

Old Durham-Chapel Hill Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Project (# EB-4707)

Prepared by the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO – December 6, 2013

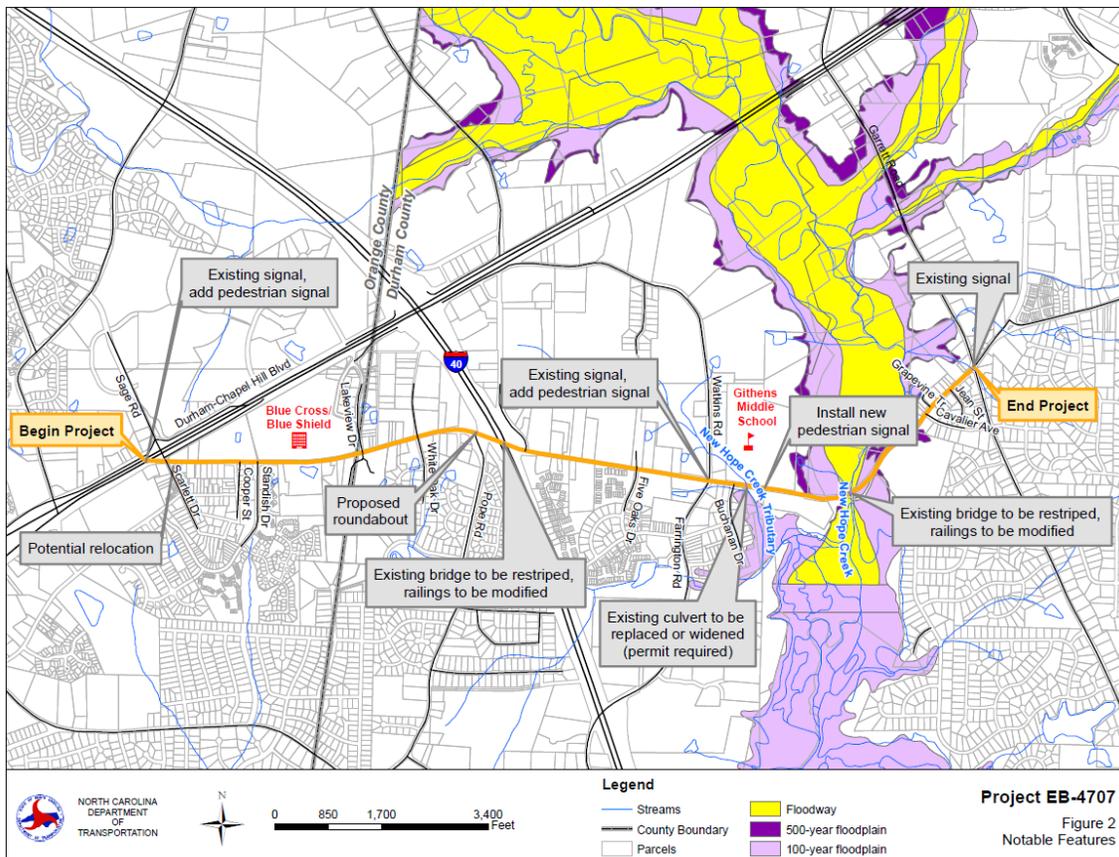
Introduction and Status

For several years work has been underway on a project to make improvements to a 2.7-mile section of Old Durham-Chapel Hill Road between Garrett Road in Durham and US 15-501 in Chapel Hill.

The design that was completed in 2011 would add sidewalks and an on-road striped bike lane on both sides of the road, pedestrian signals at two signalized intersections (US 15-501 and Farrington Road), bus stop improvements, intersection lighting, and a roundabout at the intersection with Pope Road.

On the Durham side of the project, between Garrett Road and Pope Road, the project is funded and the N.C. Department Transportation (NCDOT) is currently acquiring right-of-way and moving utilities. The project is scheduled to be advertised for construction in 2014 with construction to begin in late 2014 or 2015. It will take about one year to complete the project once construction begins.

On the Chapel Hill side of the project, between Pope Road and US 15-501, the Town of Chapel Hill does not currently have the local matching funds needed to proceed with the project. The Town will hold a meeting on December 9 to explore options for providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the corridor.



History

Discussion of improvements to Old Durham-Chapel Hill Road dates back to at least 1993, when the road was identified as a key regional bicycle connection in the *1993 Regional Bicycle Plan for Durham and Orange Counties*. More recent project milestones include the following:

- 2004: The Town of Chapel Hill Bicycle and Pedestrian Action Plan recommends providing sidewalks and bicycle lane on both sides of Old Durham/Chapel Hill Road.
- 2006: The Durham Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan and the DurhamWalks! Pedestrian Plan recommend bicycle lanes and sidewalks on Old Durham/Chapel Hill Road.
- April 15-16, 2005: A corridor feasibility study is begun with a two-day design charrette attended by more than 50 citizens, business owners, elected officials, and others.
- June 22, 2005: An open house is held for the public to view maps and provide feedback on the proposed bike and pedestrian improvements along the corridor.
- February 8, 2006: The Transportation Advisory Board of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO adopts the Old Durham-Chapel Hill Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Feasibility Study, which recommends that bike lanes and sidewalks be built on both sides of the corridor.
- February 2008: The City of Durham, the Town of Chapel Hill, and NCDOT approve an inter-governmental agreement to jointly participate in the project design and construction. NCDOT will manage the project and consultant Kimley-Horn is selected to develop project designs.
- August 24, 2010: An open house and public information session is held to provide the public and businesses the opportunity to review the preliminary engineering design plans, provide feedback on the improvements, and discuss the project. Around this same time, meetings occurred with one major employer and two neighborhood associations in the corridor to modify the design to address specific concerns.
- February 4, 2011: The Categorical Exclusion document for the project is approved by the Division Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration.
- August 2013: The City of Durham makes a decision to move forward with project construction between Garrett Road and Pope Road.

Project Costs

In 2008, the total cost of the project was estimated to be about \$4 million, not including the roundabout at Pope Road. NCDOT allocated \$400,000 in Transportation Enhancement funds to the project. The DCHC MPO allocated \$2,742,400 in federal STP-DA funds, and Durham and Chapel Hill agreed to provide the 20 percent local match of \$685,600. Chapel Hill's share of the local match was estimated to be \$239,960, which was about 35 percent of the total local match. The NC Board of Transportation later allocated \$250,000 toward the cost of the roundabout.

With the completion of detailed construction drawings in 2011, the project cost estimate rose to about \$13 million. There are several reasons for the cost increase. During the design process, modifications were made to the proposed construction plans to respond to concerns raised by adjacent property owners and address environmental impacts. Design modifications were also made in response to recommendations from local transportation and planning staff and utility providers. In addition to design modifications, there were increases in the estimated cost of utility relocations and right-of-way, which were significantly underestimated in the feasibility study.

In response to the increased cost of the project, staff from the City of Durham, Town of Chapel Hill, and DCHC MPO have applied for grant funding and explored other options for funding the project, but these efforts have largely been unsuccessful. In order to move forward with the Durham portion of the project, the DCHC MPO has allocated additional funds and the City of Durham has provided the required 20 percent local matching funds. At this time the DCHC MPO has not allocated additional funds for the Chapel Hill portion of the project. If additional funds were allocated to move ahead with the Chapel Hill portion, it is estimated that the Town of Chapel Hill would need to provide about \$995,000 for the 20 percent local match.