



October 13, 2020

Andy Henry
Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO
101 City Hall Plaza
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Mr. Henry,

The RTA business coalition, The Chamber For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro, and the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce applaud the work of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO on the US 15-501 corridor study, and we are pleased to express our support for the recommended improvement concept to reimagine 15-501, with some comments and suggestions for your consideration.

The regional business community supports the study vision to create a multimodal 15-501 corridor that will: “complement and support high-capacity transit and the adjacent, mixed use, and multimodal supportive development [and] provide for the safety, mobility, and accessibility of all users; including connections across and through the corridor.”

We support the approach to prioritize transit while improving travel for all modes of transportation by eliminating stoplights north of I-40, creating a synchronized street south of I-40, adding bus priority lanes, and integrating bicycle and pedestrian facilities. These improvements will also enable 15-501 to serve as an effective “FAST” corridor and a key piece of an emerging regional “Freeway And Street-based Transit” network that complements the upcoming bus rapid transit line in Chapel Hill and other enhanced multimodal corridors such as the I-885 connector in Durham, as well as potential updates to the transit plans in Durham and Orange counties.

We also appreciate the opportunity to offer comments to help strengthen and advance the proposed concept, via further improvements to transit connectivity and accessibility to existing and future businesses. See detailed comments on the following page. In addition, we request that the final study report include recent developments approved and proposed along the corridor—e.g., Patterson Place and Oakridge in Durham, and the Blue Hill District in Chapel Hill—and note potential development areas based on municipal land use and zoning updates.

Finally, we encourage our partners to identify ways to accelerate or scale the recommended improvements so that our communities and entire region may realize the benefits of an enhanced 15-501 corridor more quickly.

The regional business community applauds the leadership of the DCHC MPO to support our growing region. Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions and for your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

Aaron Nelson, President and CEO
The Chamber For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro

Geoff Durham, President and CEO
Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce

Joe Milazzo II, Executive Director
Regional Transportation Alliance

Additional regional business community feedback in support of recommended improvement concept for 15-501

South of I-40, along US 15-501:

- We suggest operating the priority bus lane as a “RED” transit lane that allows for right turns, emergency response, and driveway access
- Ensure adequate accessibility to businesses and consult local business community in the design and consideration of the following:
 - Mitigating traffic bottlenecks at the future Wegmans’ site
 - Reviewing the south approach of Old Durham Rd. and Fordham Blvd. to improve business access
 - Retaining frontage roads for Dobbins Drive and East Franklin Street
 - Incorporating a multi-use path along the new “Collector Road Bridge”
 - Maintaining southbound access to 15-501 from Fordham Blvd.
 - Adding a grade separated intersection at Eastown Drive and Fordham Blvd.
- Review Chapel Hill Future Land Use Map to help ensure land use/mobility compatibility and accessibility

North of I-40, along US 15-501:

- Maintain local roads and bicycle/pedestrian connections at grade
- Incorporate freeway transit stations for express service and/or moving dedicated transit lanes to the outside to better enable implementing BOSS (Bus On Shoulder System) operation for local service
- Ensure adequate accessibility to businesses and consider opportunities for directly serving adjacent developments such as Patterson Place and future developments such as Oakridge
- Review Durham Future Land Use Map to help ensure land use/mobility compatibility and accessibility

East of US 15-501, along Business 15-501:

- Operate BOSS (Bus On Shoulder System) west of Chapel Hill Rd.
- Implement a peak-period transit lane using the parking lane east of Chapel Hill Rd. and/or by modifying lane or median widths
- Review Durham Future Land Use Map to help ensure land use/mobility compatibility and accessibility