

Joe Milazzo, RTA executive director

Subject: Accelerating the US 1 Capital Freeway using toll revenue

Summary of comment: RTA has endorsed the accelerated transformation of US 1 / Capital Blvd. to a multimodal freeway from I-540 to the Wake/Franklin Co. line via dedicated toll revenue, potentially with a reduced toll rate during off-peak periods.

RTA detailed public comments:

- Thank you to CAMPO for the opportunity to speak with you today.
- RTA is the voice of the regional business community on transportation. Our mission is to deliver business leadership to get our region moving faster.
- With the increasing growth in northern Wake and Franklin counties, US 1 / Capital Boulevard north of 540 will continue to see more traffic and more delays.
- NCDOT has an outstanding plan to upgrade Capital Blvd. north of I-540 to a 10+ mile, 70 MPH design speed, multimodal freeway. When complete, there will be no stoplights, no left turns, and no driveways, saving travelers substantial time and stress. Travel from the Wake/Franklin county line to I-540 will be approximately 10 minutes via the new freeway.
- A new, higher capacity, signal-free roadway will provide much shorter and more reliable travel times, streamline commuting, and strengthen commerce and economic development for northern Wake and Franklin counties.
- Unfortunately, there is currently insufficient funding to complete the roadway in a timely fashion – and indeed the approved freeway upgrade has been continuously delayed since 2018.
- Upgrading the corridor to freeway and then activating tolls to provide dedicated revenue will both accelerate the improvement and ensure that the proposed upgrade is not further delayed in the STIP.
- NCDOT will build access roads along one or both sides of the roadway for the entire length of the corridor. The access roads will be open before tolls are activated, they will be immediately adjacent to the freeway alignment, and travelers will be able to use the access roads to avoid paying some or all tolls.
- While travel time on the access roads will certainly be slower than along a 70 MPH freeway without traffic signals, travel time along the access roads during peak periods will be comparable to, but likely more reliable than, peak travel on existing Capital Blvd today – and much shorter than what 2035 travel times along an unimproved Capital Blvd. corridor would be.
(Note: approximate current and future travel times would be: 10 minutes along future freeway, 30 minutes along access roads parallel to freeway, 30 minutes along corridor today during peak, 60 minutes along unimproved corridor in 2035 during peak.)
- Capital Boulevard is already a “toll” road. It is taking a toll on our sanity every day, and Capital Boulevard travelers are already paying a toll of delay and stress every day with nothing to show for it.
- The Turnpike Authority has clearly demonstrated in western, southern, and eastern Wake County along 540 that the Authority can deliver faster, effective, and reliable travel improvements.
- Accelerating the Capital Boulevard multimodal freeway improvement via dedicated toll revenue is not about creating a toll road. Capital Boulevard is already a “toll” road. Our request is to leverage dedicating toll revenue to create a new, reliable, signal free, travel relief option faster, for both drivers and transit, perhaps with off-peak discounts, while creating new parallel access roads for this corridor.