

Midtown-St. Albans Confirmation Group Meeting 5

July 30, 2019

Captrust Building, 4208 Six Forks Road

Attending: Ted Kunstling, Stephen Brechbiel, Robin Hammond (via phone), Alicia Barfield, Donna Rosefield

Staff: Jason Hardin, Sara Ellis, Hannah Reckhow, Kristin Williams (via phone), Bynum Walter

Consultant: Don Byson (VHB), Joe Seymour (VHB)

Guests: Brian Sloan, Duke Raleigh Hospital, Julie Yamadi, Duke Raleigh Hospital

The meeting began at 4:05.

Ellis opened the meeting with introductions and provided an update on outreach activities to date. She thanked the confirmation group members who helped with outreach this round. There were three big meetings, including a meeting held in Spanish and five pop-ups. Project team incorporated new approaches like rolling presentations, meeting across two weeks, pop-ups, Facebook events. The results included over 300 survey responses and over 300 meeting attendees. That represented a decrease in survey respondents, , and increase in meeting attendees. Demographics more closely represented the study area. Group members responded that they were glad to see more renters responding.

Seymour started discussion of the concept development, focusing on what team heard from public and how that affected concepts. The dot exercise incorporated green dots, red dots, purple dots; topics resulting in 10% of all dots emerged as trend. The survey used a sliding bar to indicate how much respondents liked or disliked certain concepts.

Pedestrian improvements: There was positive interest in pedestrian refuge islands, I-440 crossing in the North Hills area, and a "green street" concept for Quail Hollow. Priority issues were high visibility crosswalks, I-440 crossing, filling in gaps in pedestrian routes, Six Forks bridge concept, and pedestrian improvements along Bush and Industrial. As a result of feedback, the project team also added Anderson Drive and St. Albans at Wake Forest Road as pedestrian connections to consider. There was negative feedback around current maintenance of Crabtree Creek Greenway and stretching resources with further expansion south of I-440.

Green streets/Greenway: There was positive interest in bicycle lane scenario and shared use path street section, as well as location on Bush, Hardimont, and Quail Hollow. Stormwater bumpouts and shared use paths were a high priority. There was pushback on street calming on Hardimont and Navaho. Concerns included impact on traffic and on safety for people riding a bike if features such as curb extensions forced them further into the street. Seymour noted that they can be designed in a way that avoids this. There were concerns raised about potential routing for greenway connections in the Anderson Forest neighborhood. There was strong support for location of green streets on the survey. There was positive interest in greenway extension and improved bike facilities and the I-440 crossing. The greenway extension, pedestrian networks at Bush, Anderson and crossing at St. Albans were high priority. Survey indicated respondents felt facilities would garner more use.

In response, project team developed several options, incorporating overland connector on sidewalk with signage to bridge gap between off road routes and a bike/ped only extension of Quail Hollow to Anderson Drive Road following existing creek. Team also explored signal or beacon along Millbrook at Quail Hollow and/or Sweet Briar. A possible “road diet” to a three-lane section was considered, but likely would require future study.

Bridge and tunnel: There was positive feedback for crossing at North Hills/ I-440, and Bush Street. Priority of respondents was crossing at North Hills, Wake Forest at St Albans, and bike/ped crossing option. No strong trend in negative responses. Bryson reviewed impact analysis of these crossings. Duke Raleigh representatives shared concern about effect on hospital. Bryson clarified diagram showing changes in turning action south on Wake Forest.

Connectivity and access management: After this round, these are not as promising an alternative. Bryson discussed how to widen lanes without widening road, and many driveways along Wake Forest/Bland make this a false benefit. Rosefield expressed concern about increasing traffic flow through adding lanes and making it difficult to navigate. Bryson agreed that new traffic patterns make it harder to navigate at first, and level of service analysis did not show a benefit either. Survey responses were lukewarm.

Wolfpack/Navaho scenarios: There was neighborhood pushback on the option to use Pinecrest Drive as a connector, plus the creek and ravine make it a tougher option to consider. The roundabout option improves flow but doesn't preclude a future connection if desired. Duke Raleigh representatives noted that the right at the hospital gets very congested. There was discussion of adding another left turn lane to improve capacity, as well as a 'Michigan left' and changing flow internally at hospital. Group members noted that a lot of exiting traffic is leaving by St. Albans because of construction, which is a new pattern from years past. Survey responses were lukewarm, but slightly skeptical of possible effect. There was stronger support for roundabout option. Group members discussed role of streets like Hardimont in regional system, they ought to be treated differently than neighborhood streets and there are better options for traffic calming than stop signs. There was discussion of the residential context of these streets, and Don recognized team heard from residents on stop signs. Rosefield asked how project team is projecting/taking into account construction coming online south of St. Albans. Bryson reviewed population and jobs forecasting centering around I-440 and Capital. Transit will have to play a bigger role in region.

Transit: There was positive feedback for alternate BRT route and blue route on map and priority ideas were alternate BRT route and enhanced transit. No significant trend in negative feedback. Hardin reminded group that the survey asked if respondents were likely to use it, not if they support it.

Hardin reiterated that this last phase is prioritization of projects. The goal is to pick top projects, get cost estimates, and show benefits. Analysis is assuming high level of development in the area.

Kunstling was happy to see clear ideas given diverging opinions throughout process. Consistent speed limits for area would make it easier to follow. Rosefield asked about analysis of school location/future demographics and how that would affect interest in transit. Bryson described broad trends in younger

generations wanting to have choices, but also that medical trips are fasted growing type of trip. Plan is recommending a closer look at the area that includes Rowan Street, St. Timothy's School and Carroll Middle School. Sarah confirmed that there is no plan to put a new school in area.

Hardin spoke about land use recommendations associated with transportation projects. Largely positive for recommendations for non-Six Forks study area. Priority projects were "missing middle" housing along Millbrook and Atlantic. There was discussion of role of location of destination in success of pedestrian/cycling options. People don't walk because of physical and safety barriers and don't take transit because of inadequate service. Other feedback received was to include stormwater consideration near Crabtree Creek and affordable housing in larger developments. Six Forks feedback was positive on height between North Hills and Millbrook. There was negative feedback on height and transitions at North Hills, connectivity at Northfield/Westridge area. In response, the project team is dropping transition to 12 stories quicker and down to four stories adjacent to neighborhoods near North Hills.

Hardin reviewed the fall workshop format. One big meeting both in-person and online in late September. Focused on prioritization. There was discussion of including the cost and timing of projects. There was discussion of including an additional weekend event. Alicia noted that in her experience a brief video that explained intent has helped with participation on survey. Hardin confirmed with members that two events felt right. He reviewed the remaining confirmation group schedule, including a meeting mid-September to check in before the open house events and a meeting in mid-October to review input and confirm final recommendations. A final meeting will take place in December to discuss comments and final report. Participation of group chairs and other group members at Planning Commission and City Council meetings will be helpful during review.

Kunstling asked about location of other uses that affect quality of life – libraries, ABC stores. Hardin and Seymour responded that team didn't get a lot of feedback on different uses specifically outside of parks/recreation spaces.

Group members remarked that reaching out to businesses and reaching out to renters is a great practice.

There was discussion on where money would come from. This, with cost estimates will be considered in final report. Rosefield suggested having conversation with district rep on DOT board. Hardin noted that some of this is on their radar but we would want to share information.

Meeting ended at 5:58.