Support for Light Rail

Steve

Sent: 10/13/2015 1:29 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

I believe that the proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail system is essential for good growth along the proposed corridor and for better connectivity between Durham and Chapel Hill. I would like to see it implemented to conform with the Letter of Support approved by the Durham City Counsel last Monday evening.

Steven E. Gaddis

DOLRT

Carol Garth

Sent: 10/12/2015 4:23 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.org

I am bitterly opposed to the construction of the light rail proposal. To spend this much taxpayer money on a 17 mile track that serves a very limited ridership and destroys a zoned residential neighborhood is unthinkable and an abomination! We all know that the original estimates are only the start and that by the time construction begins it will be even more..and by the time it is finished it will double or triple. It's the way of the world with construction. And for what....to provide limited ridership by train for 17 miles when you could spend a fraction of the cost upgrading rapid bus transit that take riders far more different places and would benefit ALL of Durham. I can only imagine that on paper it is a feather in someone's cap to be able to say Durham has a light rail system. Doesn't it tell you something that Wake County has deemed it too expensive for the benefit? In addition, the planned proposal for the maintenance facility is inappropriate and out of character for the residential area in which you propose to locate it, not to mention the safety factors involved with an elementary school located within two blocks of a gateway. It certainly makes Farrington Road, which is already congested, impassable with the number of at grade crossings. I am not an environmental expert but have read the reports of the DEIS and the omissions that have occurred. It is not only a poor use of taxes but a poor judgement issue on the part of those who propose it. It makes no sense to embark on such an expensive undertaking when there is a bus service already in place that could be enhanced and upgraded that is more beneficial, less disruptive and more cost effective.

I support a DO NOT BUILD position!

Carol Garth
Durham resident

Sent from my iPad

DEIS regarding D-O LRT Project

Wes Geddings]

Sent: 9/15/2015 6:01 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

To Whom it May Concern:

I am a resident physician currently employed at UNC Hospital. I have owned a condo at Bradford Place on Kingswood Dr. for the duration of my time at UNC. I received a letter today in the mail about the proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project, a project that I had heard about briefly prior to today. After receiving the letter, I looked into the project further. After doing so, I feel compelled to strongly object to the currently proposed project. The light rail is currently planned to go directly in front of my and my entire community's residence, and I know there are dozens of households in my community alone. Several other communities will be affected by this rail. Your website makes the effects seem all positive, sweeping under the rug concerns about noise level and property value. Though as your presentation states there are examples of property value increasing with light rail projects, there also exist several examples of the opposite- property values declining, especially given the proximity of our community to the proposed route.

However, one need not look at other communities and history to understand these concerns; as best I can tell from researching the project, the previous route was rejected (through Meadowmont) because the residents of that community rightly spoke up against the plan. Your presentation from the most recent meeting identifies that the Meadowmont route is note being used as a "less damaging" alternative was decided on. It seems that the plan at this time is to propose different alternatives until a group less vocal lets the project slip by. The benefits to this project, which I also think are questionable and merit ongoing discussion, are clearly not greater than the negatives for every community that the project has proposed placing the rail next to.

Due to my work schedule, I will not be able to attend the public hearings. However, I want to be clear that I and my household strongly oppose the currently proposed project, as many if not all of my community does as well. I do not want to be the group that stays silent just long enough that the project gets approved, only to have the negative impacts of the project to be felt by myself and my community for the foreseeable future.

Thank you for your attention,

Weston Geddings

message --------
From: Rod Gerwe
Date: 10/4/2015 12:29 PM (GMT-05:00)
To: Natalie Murdock <
Subject: Comments to Light Rail Project

I am concerned that some proponent organizations in favor of light rail are misrepresenting themselves.

For example, one political activist organization refers to itself as representing congregations in action. It is inappropriate for a political activist organization to publicly claim that it represents the political or religious views of members of various church congregations. It is not valid to state that an political organization represents any church congregation, unless the church governing body (e.g., session or church elders) have formally endorsed the organization as representing them. Indeed a large number of members of various church congregations may have viewpoints different than what the political organization supports. People need to speak for themselves and not others who may disagree. For the most part and appropriately so, churches attend to religious matters, not politics.

Another political organization includes the words congregations, associations and neighborhoods" in its acronym and web site. Which organizations and neighborhoods have given this political group permission to represent them? Some members of neighborhoods are opposed to the current light rail plan and have publicly spoken out about their opposition..

I regard that such political organizations as these are honorable, reputable and do good work, but they represent only their members and contributors.

Sincerely,

Rod Gerwe

Light Rail Comments

Rod Gerwe]

Sent: 9/20/2015 3:30 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Dear GoTriangle Management and Planners,

It seems time now to reconsider the light rail system, put it on the back burner and now focus more seriously on potentially more cost effective and responsive public transit alternatives. When voters approved a sales tax increase for light rail and public transit a few years ago, our leaders did not adequately inform vpters as to the cost of light rail. Nor was it informed of alternatives. It was assumed that the state would fund $138 million, not the current projected $400 million. We should be pursuing enhanced public transit on a more practical, flexible, cost effective basis.

The projected costs are far too high relative to projected benefits. At $1.6 billion, the cost is $4,000 per resident (assuming 400,000 people in the area light rail would serve). It would cost at least $100 million per mile. Please remember that state and federal grants are not free money. We all pay for state and federal budgets with our taxes. Assume a highly optimistic ridership of 20,000 per day. Then multiply 365 days X 20 years X 20,000 passenger per day to get total ridership over 20 years = 146 million passengers. Divide this into $1.6 billion and you get a construction cost of $11 per passenger. So even spreading the construction cost out over 20 years, but paying up front, we find the construction cost is still a high $11/passenger. And this doesnt even begin to address operating costs, which will likely be heavily subsidized by taxpayers.

The light rail system is unfortunately one-dimensional. It wont serve RDU, RTP, NCCU, or Durham Tech or North Durham. It cannot flexibly design routes as conditions change to best capture riders and connect their homes to their jobs. The great majority of U.S. urban areas the size of Durham/Chapel Hill do not have, nor are actively planning light rail. Raleigh (with many more people) has decided against light rail. These examples should give us pause.

We need to consider alternative solutions, such as continuing to expand and enhance the bus system. A 60-passenger bus has the potential to replace up to 30 two-passenger cars at rush hour. That would go a long way to address pollution and road congestion concerns. It is likely that developing technology will afford electrically powered non-polluting buses. Expanding the bus system can be done gradually, and the bus system can better address changing needs by being more flexible in designing routes all over Durham to better capture ridership, and not be a one-dimensional line. More buses can be made accessible to minorities and low income families to connect them with jobs and affordable housing. Unfortunately to date we have

failed to fully consider this alternative and present it to the public.

It has been well recognized that the light rail project needed to pass muster with both the federal government and state. The state assembly has now determined that the current light rail projects enormous cost burden does not justify the benefits, and is not cost effective. The state has determined there are better ways to spend $400 million. The state assembly has done us a big favor to force us to put this project on hold. It is time to lay light rail aside and to to carefully evaluate alternatives and come up with a better, more flexible, more affordable and cost-effective proposal. Would you please move in this direction?

Sincerely,

Rod Gerwe

Light Rail

Rod Gerwe

Sent: 9/24/2015 10:19 AM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Dear Sirs/Madams:

I urge GoTriangle to put light rail aside for now.

The current light rail project makes poor economic sense. It is neither cost- or performance effective

As you very well know, the construction and start-up costs of upwards of $1.6 billion would amount to a huge federal state and local tax burden of $4,000 per person (assuming an optimistic 400,000 area residents) You also know that it would take a half century of service to get the per passenger construction and startup costs down to a reasonable level. For example at 20,000 riders per day, it would take 20 years to get the construction/startup costs down to $11 per passenger (divide $1.6 billion by the product of 20 years X 365 days X 20,000). This is an enormous and justified cost.

The one-dimensional rail would serve only small fraction of Durham/Chapel Hill residents, who do not live close to the proposed line. It makes little sense to assume that people not close to the line will drive their cars a significant distance and park their cars. It also does not make sense to assume that Durham and Chapel Hill governments can or should force high density growth along the rail line on which the current project is highly dependent.

GoTriangle must go back and carefully evaluate alternatives, especially gradual enhancement of the DATA bus system. Expanded bus service can be far more cost effective, would offer more flexibility and greater efficiency in designing routes and times to capture maximum ridership or address changing conditions. A one-dimensional railway cannot do that. Each 60-passenger bus can reduce rush hour traffic and road burden by replacing up to thirty 2-passenger cars on the roads. Electrically powered buses will become more practical and will reduce pollution.

It is very clear that light rail as it currently exists, is not the project that voters were led to believe four years ago when they approved the sales tax increase for light rail. The project's current cost is much higher, and the destinations it covers are not what was implied four years. Raleigh, RDU, RTP, NCCU and other key destinations are out. It is likely that the level of local funding attained four years ago will be far short of current and future needs. GoTriangle needs to come up with a new plan and the local governments need to bring it up for a new vote. The vote four years ago is no longer valid; the project presented at that time no longer is the same.

Sincerely yours,

Rod Gerwe

Fwd: Information request

Eric Ghysels [

Sent: 9/3/2015 3:59 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Cc: "Robert Healy, Ph.D." < nmurdock@gotriangle.org

Dear Natalie

I would appreciate if you could help me (and my colleague Bob Healy) with some of the supporting material pertaining to Appendix K2 in the DEIS.

1. for all discrete choice models described in Appendix K2 of the DEIS (multinomial probit, non-nested logit, etc):

(a) one spreadsheet with acronyms and data sources for both endogenous and exogenous variables. Data sources must include year/period used in the model estimation sample.
(b) one spreadsheet with acronyms and values for estimation sample for all variable specified in item (a) - for continuous variables, min, max, mean and standard deviation, for discrete variables the sample empirical frequency of the discrete outcomes.
(c) one spreadsheet with acronyms and values for input/exogenous variables for 2040 prediction sample - for continuous variables, min, max, mean and standard deviation

2. a detailed description of how light rail is incorporated as a choice in the prediction sample.

3. a clarification of the 'rail' transportation mode in the estimation and prediction sample

4. the study equivalent to the Light Rail reported in Appendix K2 of the DEIS for a Rapid Bus Transit alternative.

I appreciate you providing me with this information in a timely fashion - within a week given the upcoming public hearings.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Eric Ghysels

Eric Ghysels

Edward M. Bernstein Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
Professor of Finance at the Kenan-Flagler Business School.

http://www.unc.edu/~eghysels/

Society for Financial Econometrics: http://sofie.stern.nyu.edu
Join the SoFiE Facebook group: http://www.facebook.com/groups/sofienyu

Re: Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit

Eric Ghysels |

Sent: 9/17/2015 10:16 AM

To: stanley.a.mitchell@dot.gov

Cc: info@ourtransitfuture.com, "Robert Healy, Ph.D."

Dear Sir:

Thanks for your kind reply. Much appreciated.

We followed the proper procedure you indicated. We have been waiting for a reply. Given the 45 day constraint and the public comment period ending mid-October we cannot do a serious analysis within that time constraint unless we get the data and a response. Our formal request was filed two weeks ago.

Sincerely,

Eric Ghysels

On Thu, Sep 17, 2015 at 9:25 AM, <stanley.a.mitchell@dot.gov> wrote:

> Dear Sir/Madam:
>
> The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation process is designed to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to provide input into the environmental analysis of federal projects. NEPA requires federal agencies to document and respond to all comments/questions received on Draft Environmental Impact Statements (DEIS) during the comment period by publishing a Final Environmental Impact Statement with those responses.
>
> Because all comments must be responded to, a process has been set up by our grantee, GoTriangle, to log all comments. Because FTA must ensure we respond to all comments, inquiries we receive outside the commenting process must be directed back to the process. Not following this process could result in not meeting our requirements under NEPA and also risks a perception of preferential access being granted to information. This is why the DEIS (including its appendices) is presented for review and comment at the same time in multiple locations.
>
> Please direct all comments to www.ourtransitfuture.com/deis.
>
> **Stan Mitchell**
>
> Environmental Protection Specialist
>
> **Federal Transit Administration Region 4**
>
> 230 Peachtree St. NW, Ste. 1400
>
> Atlanta, GA 30303

stanley.a.mitchell@dot.gov

From: Eric Ghysels
Sent: Wednesday, September 16, 2015 10:36 AM
To: Gonzalez, Carlos (FTA)
Cc: Robert Healy, Ph.D.
Subject: Re: Delays - Durham-Orange Light Rail

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

Thanks for your kind reply. The information you provided is something we know about. We are trying to understand how the daily ridership is computed. What are the assumptions, are they reasonable, etc. How does one go about doing this? It can only happen if there is a transparent review process of the data and models - which is why we asked GoTriangle to share the inputs and details of the models.

If this is part of the public review process - we think it is - how does one go about this? Spending 1.6 billion $ of tax payer's money is an important matter. It seems therefore that a serious analysis of the technical details is warranted.

Your feedback and help is much appreciated.

Thanks again for your kind reply,

Sincerely,

Eric Ghysels

On Wed, Sep 16, 2015 at 10:15 AM, < wrote:

Mr. Ghysels:

Thank you for the e-mail message. Please visit this site to provide your comments: www.ourtransitfuture.com/deis . All comments for this project are being taken via U.S. Mail, e-mail, or verbal comments at public hearings on Sept. 29th and October 1st . The referenced website has complete information. All comments will be received, logged, and processed in accordance with the process described within the site.

Respectfully,

Carlos A. Gonzalez

Civil Rights Officer

FTA Region IV – Atlanta

E-mail:

From: Eric Ghysels [mailto:
Sent: Tuesday, September 15, 2015 7:29 PM
To: Gonzalez, Carlos (FTA)
Cc: Robert Healy, Ph.D.
Subject: Fwd: Delays

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

I am writing you on behalf of Bob Healy and myself. Both of us are professors at respectively Duke University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

We are trying to understand the ridership numbers GoTriangle put forward in its DEIS for the funding of the Durham-Orange Light Rail proposal. We are both technically skilled to understand the transportation demand models being used.

Despite numerous requests and e-mail exchanges - all courteous and friendly - we did not get any reply from GoTriangle. Our initial request was made Sept 2nd - shortly after the start of the 45-day period of public comments. Given the time sensitive nature of our request and the non-cooperative response from GoTriangle we apologize to approach you and ask for advice.

It is fair to say, that there are some non-compliance issues here at stake.

Below is the original request we sent. It was sent to Natalie Murdock and it was also filed through the official website set up by GoTriangle on Sept 2nd. We appreciate any help you might offer.

Sincerely,

Eric Ghysels

Dear Natalie

I would appreciate if you could help me with some of the supporting material pertaining to Appendix K2 in the DEIS.

1. for all discrete choice models described in Appendix K2 of the DEIS (multinomial probit, non-nested logit, etc):

(a) one spreadsheet with acronyms and data sources for both endogenous and exogenous variables. Data sources must include year/period used in the model estimation sample.

(b) one spreadsheet with acronyms and values for estimation sample for all variable specified in item (a) - for continuous variables, min, max, mean and standard deviation, for discrete variables the sample empirical frequency of the discrete outcomes.

(c) one spreadsheet with acronyms and values for input/exogenous variables for 2040 prediction sample - for continuous variables, min, max, mean and standard deviation

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3. a clarification of the 'rail' transportation mode in the estimation and prediction sample

4. the study equivalent to the Light Rail reported in Appendix K2 of the DEIS for a Rapid Bus Transit alternative.

I appreciate you providing me with this information in a timely fashion - within a week given the upcoming public hearings.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Eric Ghysels

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Eric Ghysels

Edward M. Bernstein Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
Professor of Finance at the Kenan-Flagler Business School.

http://www.unc.edu/~eghysels/

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Eric Ghysels

Edward M. Bernstein Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
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Eric Ghysels

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Join the SoFiE Facebook group: http://www.facebook.com/groups/sofienyu

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: MARIANNA MATINYAN + ERIC GHYSELS Email: Telephone:

Mailing Address: City: Zip Code:

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
3. *Mail a letter to D-O LRT Project - DEIS, C/O GoTriangle, Post Office Box 530, Morrisville, NC 27560*
4. *Submit a written comment form at two public information sessions and two public hearings.*
5. *Sign-up to speak at a public hearing.*

All methods of commenting will receive equal weight. All comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the development of the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Record of Decision (ROD), which is expected in February 2016. A response to substantive comments will be included in the combined FEIS/ROD.

Be advised that your entire comment, including name, address, phone number, email address, or any other personal identifying information in your comment may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Act (N.C.G.S. § 132.1 et seq.).

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

* RIDERSHIP NUMBERS ON PAGE K-2-12 IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND

& FINANCIAL BUDGET HAS MANY UNCERTAINTIES

Please Turn Over →

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Please return this form to the comment box

MR. JOYNER: The next speaker.

MR. ERIC GHYSELS: I'm Eric Ghysels. I live at which is Chapel Hill, zip code -- it's part of Durham City, Durham County.

I strongly believe that efficient and cost-effective public transportation is key to any urban development. That is why I oppose LRT. It is excessively expensive and does not serve Southpoint Mall, RTP, RDU Airport, or Raleigh.

Any economist will tell you that an environment of rapid technological change, as we are currently witnessing in the transportation sector, it is important

to invest in a flexible and adaptable transit system rather than putting huge amounts of public money into a rigid system like LRT that is extremely expensive to build and maintain.

Obviously -- Objectively looking at the facts prompted Wake County leaders to walk away from light rail and sign in favor of bus rapid transit. In my opinion, they were wise to do so.

In my remaining time, I'd like to talk as a professor and scholar of research methods such as those used by GoTriangle to predict ridership demands.

In my opinion, these numbers, such as the 23,000 daily boardings, are vastly inflated. My colleague, Bob Healy, just talked, and I requested early September details about those projections.

GoTriangle has refused to deliver using the Civil Rights Act as an excuse. I'm not a legal scholar, but I doubt the validity of that argument.

Subsequently, we requested access

to the consultants' reports, which are, in our opinion, public domain documents under the North Carolina Public Records Act. They have not been provided. I think the ridership exaggeration and the lack of transparency make this project even more suspect. Thank you.

Re: Access to information needed for public comment on DEIS

Eric Ghysels

Sent: 10/8/2015 9:58 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Cc: "Robert Healy, Ph.D."

Dear Mr. Northcutt:

Just wanted for the record acknowledge that today October 8, 2015 with five days left in the public comment period on the DEIS you sent us hundreds of pages which we will not be able to analyze in detail before the deadline.

For the record I also want to point out that our original request was addressed to you on September 2nd and revised on September 21 after you objected to our original request using Civil Rights Act arguments - arguments which in my opinion do not hold legal ground.

.

Also for the record, I want to attach my 2 minute public comments made on October 1 which describe our requests and your lack of response

Sincerely,

Eric Ghysels

DOLRT_PublicHearing.pdf

Public Hearing Comments on the Draft EIS

Eric Ghysels, October 1, 2015

I strongly believe that efficient and cost effective public transportation is key to any urban development. That's why I oppose light rail. It is excessively expensive and does ***NOT*** connect with major destinations like Southpoint, RTP, the RDU Airport or Raleigh.

Any economist will tell you that in an environment of rapid technological changes, as we are currently witnessing in the transportation sector, it is important to invest in a flexible and adaptable transit system rather than putting huge amounts of public money in a rigid system like light rail that is extremely expensive to build and maintain. Objectively looking at the facts prompted Wake County leaders to walk away from light rail and decide in favor of Bus Rapid Transit. In my opinion they were wise to do so.

In my remaining time, I'd like to talk as a professor and scholar who researches methods, such as those used by GoTriangle, to predict ridership demand.

In my opinion the numbers, such as the 23,000 daily rides, are vastly inflated. My Duke colleague Bob Healy and I requested early September, details about those projections. GoTriangle has refused to deliver – using the Civil Rights act as an excuse. While I am not a legal scholar, I doubt the validity of GoTriangle's argument. Subsequently, we requested access to the consultant reports pertaining to ridership estimates. Documents paid for with public funds and submitted to a public agency. The North Carolina Public Records Act entitles us to access this information. So far GoTriangle has not responded.

The ridership exaggeration and lack of transparency make the project even more suspect. GoTriangle is clearly hiding the implausible and counterfactual assumptions made to obtain their inflated ridership numbers and is in my opinion also violating state laws.

Comments by Eric Ghysels, [redacted] Chapel Hill, NC 27517 on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Durham-Orange LRT

13 October 2015

Most of my comments coincide with those of Robert Healy, my colleague at Duke University. As two academic researchers in respectively economics and environmental science, we have been critical of the DO LRT for the following reasons – also reflected in our public oral testimony:

--the presumption that 25 % would be covered by state funding is most likely false. It looks like the state will at most contribute 10 %. This makes the project prohibitively expensive to finance with local funding. Durham and Orange counties, Chapel Hill and Durham will have to raise taxes beyond the already imposed sales tax and car rental tax. It will be a financial train wreck – as I have argued in a OpEd which appeared in the Herald Sun (appearing at the end of this document).

--only one stop of 17 serves a major concentration of low income persons. Many people in East Durham – with a higher density of low income families – feel left out and betrayed by the planned DO LRT.

--an antiquated, inflexible fixed rail technology that is almost certain to be made obsolete by rapid developments in “smart vehicles” and “smart highways”. This argument was made in a joint OpEd published by Robert Healy and I (appearing at the end of this document).

--probable seriously overestimated ridership

--failure of the LRT to relieve traffic congestion on highway 15-501

--a large number of at grade crossings, which, based on the experience of other cities, presents a significant hazard to automobiles, cyclists and pedestrians

--a decision making process that operated largely in secret, with sham public information sessions and consistent refusal to release information Robert Healy and I requested, in clear violation of the North Carolina Public Records Act

Considered as a whole, the economic and social benefits of this project must be considered NEGATIVE.

In an Environmental Impact Statement, one must consider the project benefits as they relate to environmental costs. The latter include:

--damage to wetlands, particularly in the New Hope Bottomlands, Sandy Creek wetlands, and the area around Meadowmount

--additional air pollution caused by traffic backups at the at grade crossings

--immense amounts of CO2 and energy embodied in the concrete, steel and other materials needed to construct the LFT

--disturbance of wildlife migration, and recreational trail use, associated with the crossing of New Hope Creek at the 15-501 bridge

--light, noise and water quality impacts due to the recommended location for the Operations and Maintenance Facility

Since the environmental impacts are positive and the economic and social benefits are negative, the NO BUILD OPTION SHOULD be chosen.

There is another environmental consideration not mentioned in the DEIS. Perhaps the principal benefit put forth by GoTriangle as a justification for the use of LRT technology and the choice of this particular corridor is the opportunity to concentrate high density development around the station areas. Much attention is paid in the DEIS of future population and job growth in the Research Triangle region. But is the LRT corridor (1) the place where growth is most likely to occur and (2) the place where growth should be encouraged from a planning and environmental standpoint?

I believe the answer to both questions is NO. Two of the principal anchors for the LRT route are Duke Hospital and UNC Hospital. Neither is likely to grow significantly. One already sees both health systems putting new freestanding facilities in locations far from the main hospital. Downtown Durham is attracting growth, but the narrow streets and many historic buildings mean that it does not

have unlimited capacity for new buildings (unlike downtown Charlotte in 1990, for example). The LRT proposes new, very high density nodes on the edge of Chapel Hill, yet Chapel Hill residents have long been noted for opposition to large scale growth and density.

I believe that the best place to accommodate new population and job growth is in the Research Triangle Park and in nearby areas (e.g. Morrisville). These places have abundant building sites, good transportation (especially if supplemented by enhanced transit), and little citizen opposition to growth.

OpEd Herald Sun August 27, 2015

Durham-Orange Light Rail: A Train Wreck in the Making

Eric Ghysels

Edward M. Bernstein Distinguished Professor of Economics

Professor of Finance, Kenan-Flagler Business School

UNC Chapel Hill

I strongly believe that public transportation is key to address the ever increasing demand for mobility and the resulting road congestion problems in the Triangle. That's why I oppose the proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (DO LRT). It is excessively expensive and does ***NOT*** connect Chapel Hill or Durham with major commercial, retail, or employment destinations east of the corridor like Southpoint Mall, Research Triangle Park, the RDU Airport or Raleigh.

Too many want to debate political affiliations, i.e. Republican versus Democrat. I prefer to stick to data and facts.

Durham and Orange voters approved a 1/2 cent sales tax for regional public transportation to support growth in the Triangle. In 2011, Durham voters were presented with plans to augment bus service and explore alternatives including a Light Rail Train (LRT) network linking Chapel Hill, Durham and Raleigh. The

fact is that Wake County has decided against LRT and has opted for more flexible and cost-effective rapid transit options.

DO LRT has been vastly downgraded from the original plans presented to voters. The travel time along the 17 mile corridor has increased from 34 to 44 minutes to travel from Chapel Hill (UNC Hospitals) to East Durham (Alston Avenue). I am tempted to call it the snail train, given its average speed of 24 miles per hour. It does neither service downtown Chapel Hill nor the campus of NCCU. The projected frequency of service has been reduced from every 5 minutes to every 20 minutes, and every 10 minutes during peak commuting hours.

All this for a cost of $1.6 billion, to be shared 50% Federal funding, 25% local and 25% state. The 25% local funding is comprised of a 0.5% sales tax, $10 annual vehicle registration fee and 5% tax surcharge on car rentals. At this point, the state will committed a maximum of 10 % funding. So even if the Federal funding is approved, the project is still short $240 million.

On top of this are annual operating and maintenance costs. In Charlotte light rail is a serious financial burden on the city's budget. Ridership has remained flat – despite a growing population - at 16000 daily boardings (the DO LRT projects 23000 boardings with a smaller population). Low ridership results in local governments taking the hit, or other transportation solutions being curtailed.

Advocates of LRT often suggest that non-rider benefits, such as reduced congestion and emissions, justify the huge expense. Without service to communities throughout Durham or to RTP or Wake County, it is hard to imagine a snail train will have any significant traffic benefits at all.

LRT advocates argue that the 17 mile track is only the beginning, and speculate that service will be added to RTP and points east. This is difficult to imagine now that Wake County is out of the picture. The Charlotte experience also indicates that expansion plans are shelved once the costs run up.

Advocates never discuss how hybrid and fuel cell technology combined with telecommuting, smart cars, and driverless technologies will change the face of commuting in the future. LRT is likely to be obsolete before the first fare is collected.

Based on cost arguments alone, the D-O LRT is a financial train wreck and an extreme fiscal burden on growth in the Triangle. More importantly, it doesn't address the transportation issues facing our growing community.

Objectively looking at the facts prompted Wake County leaders to walk away from the LRT option. In my opinion they were wise to do so.

OpEd Herald Sun, September 5, 2015

Are we building a 1.6 billion dollar public transit museum?

Eric Ghysels

Edward M. Bernstein Distinguished Professor of Economics

Professor of Finance, Kenan-Flagler Business School

UNC Chapel Hill

Robert Healy

Professor Emeritus of Environmental Policy

Nicholas School of the Environment

Duke University

Around the year 2000 a colleague of ours built a brand new house. He was a computer geek and hardwired his entire house with cables so that every room had an outlet. Barely a year later, one of us moved into an existing home. It was the time that wireless routers came on the market. Thanks to the innovations in WiFi technology it was easy to have internet connections anywhere. Our colleague still had wires cluttered on the floor, connecting his laptop to a nearby outlet. No such thing with the new technology. The router came at a fraction of the cost our colleague spent on wiring his house.

The pre-wired house is a metaphorical caution for the ongoing discussions about the light rail line (LRT) that is proposed between Durham and Chapel Hill. GoTriangle projects a cost for the 17 mile corridor of $1.6 billion.

What do we get for this enormous amount of public money? A train running at an average speed of 24 miles per hour, driven by a live operator, moving along 17 miles of steel rails in a 30 foot wide corridor. Its route will not come near such important traffic generators as downtown Chapel Hill, North Carolina Central University and Durham Tech. Because Wake County has recently opted out (wisely in our opinion) of the LRT project, the snail train will not go to RTP nor the airport nor to downtown Raleigh.

In addition to problems of service and cost, the LRT system could be technologically obsolescent before it's built. Even if all goes well, the earliest opening date for LRT is 2025. Therefore the technology chosen will be 13 years old at the time of opening.

We are in the midst of extremely rapid technological improvements affecting all forms of transportation. In 2004, in a Defense Department "challenge" for automatically guided vehicles on a simple 150 mile desert course, the best of 15 vehicles crashed after only 7 miles. Only three years later, six vehicles successfully negotiated a 60 mile "urban" course which had other vehicles, obstacles, and traffic regulations. Since then, and especially in the last five years, development of an "intelligent car," that can essentially drive itself for all or part of the journey has proceeded very rapidly. Already, some models can self-park and avoid many kinds of collision. Recently, Google has been testing a "driverless car" on public streets. (and Google is only one of many firms looking seriously into this concept). A "driverless highway" is also being investigated. For the route we are dealing with, it is irrelevant whether the technology is embedded in the car or the roadway.

By the end of a decade, it is very likely that cars (and buses) can travel on 15-501 and other arterial streets at high speed, either in all lanes or a designated lane, with little space between vehicles. This will raise average speed and will also reduce congestion by doubling or trebling the number of vehicles that can be

accommodated by the road's current width. It would be ironic — but by no means impossible -- to see vehicles moving along 15-501 more rapidly than the LRT.

As economists, we are acutely aware of the perils of technological forecasting. We believe that the best defense against forecasting errors is preserving flexibility. This is exactly what the GoTriangle plan, firmly committed to a fixed guideway, operator driven train does not do. Far better would be a plan that reserved a corridor that could be used by a variety of vehicles. It need not have tracks and it need not be 30 feet wide. In addition, we would not need to build a 78 million dollar operation and maintenance facility – a rail yard - currently planned in the middle of a residential area, a stone throw away from an elementary school.

Let's be very sure our plans for the future of transit do not include billions of dollars for a transit museum.

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Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Lat Ghysels

Mailing Address: City: Chapel Hill, NC Zip Code: 27514

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
3. *Mail a letter to D-O LRT Project - DEIS, C/O GoTriangle, Post Office Box 530, Morrisville, NC 27560*
4. *Submit a written comment form at two public information sessions and two public hearings.*
5. *Sign-up to speak at a public hearing.*

All methods of commenting will receive equal weight. All comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the development of the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Record of Decision (ROD), which is expected in February 2016. A response to substantive comments will be included in the combined FEIS/ROD.

Be advised that your entire comment, including name, address, phone number, email address, or any other personal identifying information in your comment may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Act (N.C.G.S. § 132.1 et seq.).

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Sounds good as long as there will be adequate park and ride areas to go with it. I will use this for recreational needs and reduce my car use for future.

How safe will the system be at night when we return home from evening outings. Durham has a lot of drive-by shooting incidents and people waiting at a rail stop will not be immune.

What is the cost of one way ride?

If it takes more than 45 min to complete a one way

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OurTransit FUTURE

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

now people will not think it will be worth the effort and / or prefer to carpool and stay in safety of their own car.

Please return this form to the comment box

MR. JOYNER: Thank you. As our next speaker's coming up, I would like to call anyone who has a speaker card with the number 4. If you would, please, come up and line up behind Jeffrey and he'll make sure that you're in the correct order.

And if our speaker will wait just a moment until everybody has a chance to be seated so that they won't disrupt you.

Okay. Thank you for your patience. You can go ahead.

MR. CHARLIE GIBBS: Thank you. My name is Charlie Gibbs. I live at in northern Durham County.

And there have been a lot of good comments made and there are a lot of things to be considered and what -- and this is -- to the -- to the people who are in charge of designing this -- this light rail system, there are some decisions to be made.

I do support the regional rail -- light rail transit. I don't prefer the way it's evolved, but I think that's something that will come eventually, but right now that's not an issue.

I'm also a member of the City-County Planning Commission, and I'm not speaking for that commission. I want to make that plain. I'm speaking for myself personally.

Being a member of the commission, I have had access to long-range plans for Durham and the downtown area, the Central Park area, the changes in traffic pattern downtown, and I think this light rail is going to affect that. So it needs to be in -- in part -- part of our plans, but if

this -- if this LRT is built, and I hope it is, I'm speaking mainly in favor of the new stop at -- the Center City stop. I think this would be a good crossroads between the east-west rail and north-south traffic, and I -- and that's -- I would like to see RTP included at some point and the airport, and I think that will come, but this is a good first step in getting what we need to connect us all regionally. Thank you.

MR. JOYNER: Thank you.

How long should it take if I sent an email to N. Murdock for her to answer

Charlotte Gilbert

Sent: 8/26/2015 3:07 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

I have questions that I sent to Ms. Murdock. How long should I anticipate waiting on answers?

Thank you

Charlotte Gilbert

Questionable Figures??

Charlotte Gilbert

Sent: 8/26/2015 3:32 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

These are your numbers. HOW can you say that a population of 673K (and will the train even serve any other part of Durham County that you can even begin to include them in this projection) in 2040 will support a train that in Charlotte TODAY has a population of 792,862 and they only average 16K riders a day? The math does not add up. Charlotte is losing money on the light rail and has put on hold plans to add extra lines.

STOP the train!! We can find another option. Light Rail is not for Durham!! DON"T WASTE MY TAX MONEY!!

Charlotte Gilbert

Table 1.1-1: Forecasted Population Growth 2010	**2040**	**Percent Change**
Durham County	258,000	422,000	64%
Orange County	129,000	197,000	52%
D-O Corridor	27,000	54,000	100%

Subject: **Get Involved Contact Form**
From: **Charlotte Gilbert <**
Date: **Tue, Sep 01, 2015 6:54 am**
To: **info@ourtransitfuture.com**

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Message Body:
Let me list the negatives to the Durham-Chapel Hill Light Rail:
- COST verses reward, not going to ever recoup the cost of building this stupid train!! Right now 1.8 BILLION to build. What will be the cost in 2020? It won't be 1.8! Charlotte (Go Triangle's model) is bleeding money and expansion is on hold.
- 17 miles of a train route that will only serve a minority of people makes no sense!
- Destroying a beautiful piece of RESIDENTAL land for a clearly INDUSTRIAL operation is the dumbest thing I have ever heard of!! Purchase the empty lots at South Square, there is a stop planned so you will not be going out of your way. NO to the Farrington Rd site for the ROMF!!! Why is Go Triangle so set on this site? They obviously don't live in the area.
- Placing a parking lot on wet lands that may impact the water table for the WHOLE Triangle, again not smart. Do we want to be known as the community that ruined Jordan Lake for future residents?
- Why will there be a 900 space parking garage at Alston Ave when your own figures state that less than 50% of residents in that area own cars? Who do think is going to use those spaces?
- What are the future plans to expand to Northern Durham? To me the congestion on Duke St and Roxboro Rd during peak hours is SIGNIFICANTLY worse than 15/501, which is what I drive everyday.

Wake Co said no to light rail, we should be doing the same.

Is Go Triangle so determined to build this rail line that they have lost sight of the big picture? Yes traffic is an issue for the Triangle and needs to be addressed. But not with this proposal. You are wasting my tax money and doing a poor job of steering Durham/Chapel Hill towards the future. It will be too expensive, there will be significant loss of quality of life for those that are impacted by the rail, and without access to Wake County it is truly the Train To Nowhere.

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Subject: Get Involved Contact Form
From: Charlotte Gilbert
Date: Tue, Sep 01, 2015 7:22 am
To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Message Body:
Please find Steve Medlin's comments on the ROMF at the Farrington Rd site dated March 15, 2015

http://ourtransitfuture.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-03-12-Durham-County-ROMF_Memo_031315.pdf

Durham's own Planner cannot support the Farrington Road site. Listen to someone other than Go Triangle!

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

-------- Original message --------
From: Charlotte Gilbert
Date: 8/25/2015 1:35 PM (GMT-05:00)
To: Natalie Murdock <NMurdock@gotriangle.org>
Subject: Light Rail Questions

Good afternoon - as this process for the light rail continues, I have questions and concerns about how the trains cross the many roads along the route. I would appreciate your answers to these questions.

1) Are the trains operated by a conductor?

2) If no how are the signal arms at each of these crossing triggered?

3) How long does it take from the time the switch is pushed for the safety arms to come down, stay down, and then come up again?

4) Do the trains cross the roads at the same time or is crossing completely random? I am trying to figure out how long I will be stuck everyday.

5) How loud are the signal crossing alarms? Not a nice way to wake up each morning or trying to get to sleep at night

6) Do the trains communicate with local EMS? If so what is the mechanism?

7) Why is the route not raised coming from 15/501 onto Erwin? As the entrance to the Medical Complex that portion of the route makes no sense.

8) How does Go Triangle plan to widen Erwin Rd?

9) What is the cost to park? Daily or monthly? What is the cost of the ride? More for rush hour?

10) What are the plans for the safety of riders in the trains and parking lots, especially early in the morning and late in the evenings?

11) What is the containment system that the maintenance building plans to use to catch the dirty water and other chemicals during the repair and cleaning of these trains?

12) How tall are the wires that the trains attach too?

13) Does weather affect the speed and dependability of the trains?

14) What is Go Triangle's plan if the Federal Government funds do not meet the actual cost of this project? Where is the money going to come from?

15) How much has Go Triangle spent so far?

16) Have you hired any outside companies or groups to study the environmental impact that this project may cause to the surrounding areas? If no, why not? This is a valid question that deserves an answer.

17) Why is there a 990 space parking garage at Alston Ave? This is the site that your own statistics show has a low access to private cars, that is why this station is in this area, so why so many parking spaces? It will not be the locals filling it up, who are you expecting to use this?

I am sure I will have more questions in the future in preparation for the up coming meeting in September. I appreciate your time and look forward to seeing your responses.

Charlotte Gilbert

Get Involved Contact Form

Charlotte Gilbert [

Sent: 9/7/2015 1:02 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address

Message Body:
I sent an email to Natalie Murdock with questions about safety on August 24, 2015. I have still NOT heard back from her, today is September 7, 2015. How am I supposed to be an informed citizen if Go Triangle won't answer my questions?? Very poor communication from this company! Safety is important since light rail deaths are only 2nd behind motorcycles deaths. Why won't Go Triangle answer my questions?

–
This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Get Involved Contact Form

Charlotte Gilbert

Sent: 9/15/2015 5:18 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Message Body:
The NC legislature has in the new fiscal budget for 2015 that was made available today and I want to know how you plan to pay for this project. This is what was quoted: "Caps state funding for light rail projects at $500,000 per project. That would limit efforts to build a light rail line in the Triangle"

This is project cannot be funded by the citizens of Durham and Chapel Hill without the benefit of state and federal help. We cannot be asked to shoulder anymore financially for this train. And since I don't want the train at all, I am very concerned that some sort of tax increase will be implemented. Please please pause and look at this project from a fiscal point of view. 1.6 or 1.8 BILLION to build, 16 MILLION to run each year, that is a huge amount of money. Time to reassess this project we cannot afford this.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Get Involved Contact Form

Charlotte Gilbert |

Sent: 9/17/2015 3:45 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Message Body:
The answer to my question " how will EMS communicate with the trains" was not answered.
Question #10 How do trains communicate with local EMS?

Please see DEIS Chapter 4.12 Safety and Security. - that is not an answer. Go Triangle will work with first responders?? How are emergencies handled in Charlotte? You keep referring to your work in Charlotte, there must a plan in place for their rail line? What is the communication between EMS and the trains in Charlotte?
This is what I found:

4.12.4.6 Police, Security, and Emergency Service Operations
As the design of the NEPA Preferred and Project Element Alternatives advances, the D-O LRT Project Team will coordinate with law enforcement, emergency and medical personnel, and other public agencies to investigate impacts of the potential light rail system on their day-to-day operations. For example, the D-O LRT Project Team will work with fire departments to determine whether implementation of the NEPA Preferred Alternative warrants changing dispatch locations for emergency services.
Coordination with departments would also be conducted during the Engineering Phase to get input on the development of a SSMP, and to develop plans and materials useful for training of police, security, and emergency service personnel. The training would include methods by which these personnel can assist in informing and educating the public about system safety.
By coordinating with responders early in the risk assessment process, project team members can work with public agencies to develop mitigations, if necessary. Mitigation for restricting or constricting rubber tired vehicular access along an existing roadway includes constructing the guideway in embedded track such that emergency vehicles can bypass other vehicles via use of the embedded track condition. The LRT operation would yield to these infrequent occurrences. Access to emergency and health care facilities would not be compromised by the LRT.
In addition, Triangle Transit will work with local law enforcement and emergency medical personnel to develop a training plan that involves responding to incidents at light rail facilities and on light rail vehicles. This plan will include a schedule for training prior to and during revenue operations.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Get Involved Contact Form

charlotte gilbert

Sent: 9/17/2015 3:56 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: charlotte gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Message Body:
Your own answer about traffic reduction. No significant impact?? Wow 1.8B is a lot to spend on something that does not reduce traffic.

Question #4 How will the proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project affect NC-54 and U.S. 15-501?

The impacts of proposed D-O LRT Project on US 15-501 and NC 54 are discussed in DEIS section 3.2. In general, the project is not expected to have a significant effect on traffic on those roadways where it is close to D-O LRT Project. However, the D-O LRT Project will provide a competitive and reliable travel alternative to the congestion on these roadways.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Get Involved Contact Form

Charlotte GIlbert [

Sent: 9/21/2015 1:32 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte GIlbert

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Message Body:
I have concerns that the ITRE report written by NC State covers "ALL of Wake, Durham, and Orange counties as well as parts Person, Granville, Franklin, Nash, Johnston, Harnett, and Chatham counties." Why are these extra counties included when we are discussing 17 miles of Durham and Orange Counties? There is no discussion of expanding the light rail beyond this. This completely skews the numbers and makes it very hard to get an accurate assessment of the project's goal.

Why was State told include these extra areas? Why was a report not generated for this project? Please answer

--
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Get Involved Contact Form

Charlotte Gilbert [ ]

Sent: 9/21/2015 1:38 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address

Message Body:
Your table 7.1 in O&M Cost Methodology Report - shows our "peer" light rail systems. How can you think that the population of Durham/Chapel Hill will ever resemble the cities listed? Why did Go Triangle not find a community that does resemble the area being address for this light rail project? Is there a city in this county that has light rail that resembles Durham/Chapel Hill? Please identify a community in the US that has light rail that looks like the Triangle.

--
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Get Involved Contact Form

Charlotte Gilbert [ ]

Sent: 9/21/2015 1:45 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Message Body:
Looking at your charts 7-1; 7-2; 7-3 - the Charlotte light rail is the MOST expensive and when you review the breakdown on 7-2 peer systems, Charlotte brings in the least amount of money and has the fewest passengers per system.

Go Triangle has based all of the Durham/Chapel Hill needs on the system in Charlotte. Our population is not even close to what Charlotte's is. So if Charlotte is the most expensive with the least amount of revenue generated, HOW is this line expected to make any money, let alone break even financially? Please answer how this project will not loose money?

--
This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Get Involved Contact Form

Charlotte Gilbert |

Sent: 9/22/2015 12:53 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Phone Number:

Email Address

Message Body:
If the NC Legislature has capped spending at 500K and the vote to fund this project is scheduled for November 11, 2015 - how is the light rail going to be funded??? You cannot possibly think that the citizens of Durham and Chapel Hill can make up the difference!!! The Federal government is not going to give us the money, so where is the money going to come from?

The November 11th vote needs to be pushed back until funding can be obtained, at ALL levels.

Charlotte Gilbert

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Charlotte Gilbert

Mailing Address: City: Chapel Hill Zip Code: 27517

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
3. *Mail a letter to D-O LRT Project - DEIS, C/O GoTriangle, Post Office Box 530, Morrisville, NC 27560*
4. *Submit a written comment form at two public information sessions and two public hearings.*
5. *Sign-up to speak at a public hearing.*

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Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

In 2011 only 17% of Durham voters turned out to vote. That is not a majority of Durham voters. Not all of our citizens will benefit from this project if it moves forward. I am sure that folks in N. Durham would like to have some relief from traffic along Roxboro Rd. When will the train get to them. Its not because that is not in the plans.

Why was such an effort to notify and inform E. Durham and low income residents but not the residents along 54/Farrington Rd/Leigh Farms? most

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Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Please return this form to the comment box

Gain the same attention?

Why did the ITRE report include counties that have nothing to do with Durham/Orange counties included in the numbers. Last time I checked Johnston & Granville are nowhere near the proposed rail.

Why does GoTriangle insist on comparing Durham/Orang to Charlotte? GoTriangle also insists on comparing to large metropolitan cities. We are not Baltimore, Dallas, Denver, LA, San Fran just to name a few. K-28-2

Where is the funding going to come from? We can't build this without funding!! Durham/Orange must wait for the funding to happen.

So disappointing that so few people will make such a huge negative impact on our community

Durham/Orange light rail

Charlotte Gilbert |

Sent: 10/12/2015 8:17 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.org

This transit project is not in the best interest of our area. It will destroy environmentally sensitive wet lands, it will too expensive to run, it only serves the smallest of our population, and the saddest fact, we the citizens of Durham and Orange Counties have been lied too.

I was never notified or offered education about the rail site. Go Triangle made every effort to include the underprivileged and economically disadvantaged but didn't offer the same time and information to those of us on the Southwest side of town. Why???? I deserve the same time and effort because I will be paying for it too.

There is still no funding from the State level how will this ever be built? This would be the most negative impact to the area. This rail cannot be built.

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Alicia Gilchrest Email: Telephone:

Mailing Address: City: Durham Zip Code: 27707

How to Comment on the DEIS

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2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
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Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

I think this will be very helpful for most people.

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Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Please return this form to the comment box

rail

Holly Gilliam

Sent: 10/1/2015 9:27 AM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

The rail system needs to go to Mebane and/or Hillsborough, NC.
Holly Gilliam

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Email: Telephone:

Mailing Address: City: Zip Code:

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
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Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Please Turn Over →

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Please return this form to the comment box

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

We need this LRT project to be approved and implemented as soon as possible. The roads are becoming unbearable - esp I-40 and any road in and out of Chapel Hill. I fully support this system as it will bring growth to the economy, provide more opportunities for those people in poverty to grow and improve their situation and it brings us closer as a community. I would use this system everyday as my commute to Chapel Hill for work is a daily nightmare.

Melissa Gilbert

Rail Operations and Maintenance Facilities

Steve Glantz

Sent: 9/29/2015 5:45 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

I would like to express my opinion that locating the Rail Operations and Maintenance Facilities at the Cornwallis Rd. location would have a very significant impact on the local residents and the community as a whole. I believe, after riding by both locations, that the Farrington Road location is less disruptive to the local community.
Thanks
Steve Glantz

Durham Orange Light Rail

Bo Glenn |

Sent: 9/26/2015 9:08 AM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

The Durham Orange Light Rail (D-OLR) is critical to Durham and Orange County. We are at a crossroads due to large population growth. Instead of the old failed solutions that fill short term needs, the D-OLR will meet the challenges and opportunities of future growth with a modern long-term transportation solution which will set an example for other communities. One that helps move people safely and efficiently to where they need to go, while contributing to cleaner air, making our nation more energy independent and increasing equitable access to training, jobs and vital services. With our population boom, people and businesses would otherwise be plagued with congestion, long commutes and lack of transportation choices. Unlike Wake County, which has to please 12 municipalities, we have a better choice than building more roads, beltways and parking lots.

D-OLR is the spine anchoring a multimodal 21st century transportation system with advanced electric powered light rail technology, providing faster, more reliable and frequent service to our major universities, medical and employment centers in our most heavily traveled corridor while avoiding the costs of roadway construction and maintenance, dispersed parking lots and auto emissions. When complete the system will include expanded interconnected high frequency bus service, improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities, park and ride lots at transit stations and neighborhood centers, commuter rail to RTP and Raleigh, with easy and frequent access to the airport.
In 2008, following years of intense analysis, the Special Transit Advisory Commission determined that the highest level of future travel intensity of any of the 18 corridors in Wake, Durham or Orange counties – was in the Durham-Orange corridor. The D-O corridor also has the highest concentration of transit dependent households, is constrained from further road development by the New Hope Creek corridor and the Jordan Lake game lands and has the highest cross county public transportation usage in the state. This decision has been confirmed by 7 more years of study, analysis and public input. One that fulfills a community-wide vision of compact, walkable neighborhoods; dense, vibrant downtowns; world class universities and medical centers and a more environmentally responsible community.

The cities that we are competing with for 21st century commerce and jobs continue to invest in high capacity light rail transit. For example, based on its recent success, Charlotte will double its light rail line in 2017. For Durham to compete, we need a

transit system that will move people, goods and services quickly, dependably and outside of auto traffic. To compete, we need to demonstrate our continued commitment to innovation and smart growth.
Our past auto centric focus has resulted in sprawl devouring farm land, forests and open space, polluting our air and water, harming our health and threatening what makes Durham and Chapel Hill great places to live and raise a family.
National and international experience demonstrates that the certainty of a fixed rail line does more to shape land use and encourage and concentrate compact development than any other form of transportation. Charlotte has enjoyed 1.4 billion dollars in development around its light rail line. We have now have 3000 apartments being developed around the proposed transit stations. Duke has made a greater commitment to downtown Durham following the approval of the D-OLR.
Fifty percent of the cost of the $1.5 billion price tag for D-OLR will come from a federal transportation grant. These federal dollars, which will be a huge boost to our economy, are only available for the proposed D-OLR. The increased development will grow our tax revenues dramatically.

National studies have shown that every $1 billion invested in light rail supports and creates 47,500 jobs. Businesses located near light rail have improved productivity due to employee reliability and less turnover, with a larger, more diverse labor pool. As development locates near stations, many more jobs will be available along the transit network. Our family budgets are being squeezed by the costs of commuting. Many people cannot become productive members of our society because they lack basic transportation. Many cannot afford a car, much less an “intelligent” one. We need a transit system now that will move everyone efficiently and economically. We do not have the luxury to wait for ivory tower solutions as costs continue to rise.

Robert B Glenn, Jr.

Durham, NC 27705
(

Light rail support

Sent: 10/11/2015 9:40 AM

To: =?utf-8?Q?info@ourtransitfuture.com?=

Cc: "Bo_Glenn"

Please support a light rail system!

Why isn't the light rail going to the airport?

The Durham-Orange Light Rail Project is the best project for our area. Some folks continue to argue that the first line should go to the airport. Funding under the New Starts Program is very competitive. All major metropolitan areas are pursuing funding. For our first light rail project, we decided to pick the corridor that gave us the best chance of getting an award. We wanted to check as many boxes under the federal guidelines for funding as possible. After years of study, in 2008, the Special Transit Advisory Commission report found that the highest level of future travel intensity of any of the 18 corridors in Wake, Durham or Orange counties – was in the Durham-Orange corridor.

A major emphasis under the federal guidelines is providing transit for transit dependent persons which are defined as households without a car. The Durham-Orange corridor has the highest level of transit dependent households.

The D-O LRT project connects the campuses of the two largest employers in the state, Duke University and Medical Center and University of North Carolina and Medical Center. Travel for these institutions goes in both directions all day. The opportunities for growth and collaboration are huge.

Another consideration for the grant is the projected level of ridership on the line. The average person goes to his place of employment 250 times a year. That same person goes to the airport 4-5 times a year. To win the federal New Starts grant, the line connecting Durham and Chapel Hill makes sense as the first line because there is more than enough travel within the Durham-Chapel Hill metro area to make DOLRT a success as a standalone investment. There will never be the same level of ridership to the airport.

Will funds spent on rail be diverted from money needed for bus expansion?

The Durham-Orange Light Rail Project is the best transportation modality for the D-O corridor. Some folks argue that expanding our existing bus network is a better use of funds. The federal New Starts grant is for capital funds for major transportation projects, such as the light rail project. These funds would not be available to expand our existing bus network. There is no competition for dollars between buses and trains for the project. Capital funding from the N.C. Department of Transportation, if approved under the present funding formula, would only be available for the light rail project. So if the light rail project is not pursued there will not be a federal or state money which can be diverted to another mode of transportation. If we receive funding from the New Starts grant it could be as much as $900,000,000 and State money of $135,000,000.

The federal New Starts program funds 50% of the project and requires a 25% local match. The local match for the D-O LRT come a basket of local taxes and fees such as the one-half cent sales tax which was recently approved by the voters. Under the authorizing statute, the sales tax could not be used for

existing bus services. It is seen as new money for our new program.

When the DOLRT line opens, part or all of 17 different bus routes will be made redundant by the rail. Those buses can then be redirected to underserved portions of the two counties, or to add later hours on existing routes, or to improve frequency in corridors with growing ridership that are not along the DOLRT corridor. In addition as part of the D-O transportation plan, there will be funds directed to better bus service connected to the light rail line so that we will have an integrated system.

Light Rail Transit has similar capital costs as highways.

All transportation infrastructure improvements are expensive. The D-O LRT is a modality that has a similar cost as road construction. Roads and transit both require the same basic construction elements like cement, steel, land and labor. Looking at passenger carrying capacity, light rail has a similar cost as a highway. This is without considering the social, aesthetic, and community impact of large multi lane highways coursing through neighborhoods. For example, the light rail line can carry as many people as an six-lane freeway by merely adding cars on its narrow right of way. The 3.2 mile East End Connector presently under construction in Durham County is predicted to cost $206,465,000 or $64,520,312 per mile for four lanes of travel or $16,130,078 per lane per mile. Adjusted upward for projected inflation, the 17 mile light rail project is predicted to cost $1,800,000,000 or $105,882,352 per mile. The line is equivalent to 6 lanes of travel or $17,647,058 per lane per mile.

Rail-based transit attracts new riders and new commerce.

Light rail serves a broader population, including choice riders and need riders. This increased ridership can have a positive impact on existing transit users by increasing the demand for bus services, with increased funding.

For the economy to grow, transportation options must grow. Our region is an important commercial center, which attracts new companies and jobs to the area. In order for companies to transport employees, customers and goods quickly, we must manage congestion on our roads.

A comprehensive transit system is also vital to companies looking to recruit the best and brightest talent to the region. Many of these prospects come from major cities with light rail and other forms of rapid transit. They expect no less here. Housing and lifestyle choices also help attract and retain younger employees. In the Charlotte region, more than 30% of seniors and 43% of young professionals say they would like to live at or near a rapid transit station.

Light rail transit is a crucial investment in the future of our region because increased auto travel has contributed to an air quality situation that could threaten federal funding for road projects. Riding light rail transit is one way we can help make our air cleaner and conserve natural resources. Car traffic account for 63% of our region's ozone pollution. Transit emits 92% less VOC (volatile organic compounds) and 50% less NOx (nitrogen oxides) per passenger mile than a car. Without a balanced transportation system, our air quality and our funding could both be in jeopardy.

LRT attracts transit-oriented development, including housing, retail, and other commercial development.

Because it is of a more permanent nature, light rail spurs investment along rail lines in a way that buses do not. Such development often creates more accessible, mixed-use communities that benefit non-drivers.

The transportation planners in the Triangle have studied successful transit systems throughout the United States, including cities like Charlotte, Dallas, Denver, Portland and San Diego. This process

has been ongoing since the 1990s. There have been hundreds of information sessions in the Triangle. Through this process, it has become clear that a successful plan must: offer choices that appeal to all lifestyles; incorporate smart land development; include a balanced mix of transportation options including light rail; and create pedestrian-friendly, livable communities in the station areas. The vast majority of citizens support this vision. This vision was approved when 60% of voters chose to tax themselves to make this happen.

Proximity to transit often increases residential property values overall

A review of more than 100 studies concerning the impacts transit service has on nearby property values found that proximity to transit often increases property values enough to offset the local contribution for transit system capital costs. This is because many people consider transit a welcome alternative to gas pumps, parking lots and crowded freeways. In Massachusetts, the median price of single-family homes nearly doubled in 19 communities after they gained commuter rail service. In Chicago, properties next to transit stations had a 20% higher increase in value compared to those located a half-mile away. Rapid transit played a key role in the revitalization of South End in Charlotte, where property values have increased 89% since 2001, partially in anticipation of the light rail line.

Proximity to light rail stations increases accessibility to employment for working families.

In a study of the Hiawatha LRT Line in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, proximity to light rail stations and bus stops offering direct rail connections are associated with large, statistically significant gains in accessibility to low-wage jobs. These gains stand out from changes in accessibility for the transit system as a whole. After light-rail construction, low-wage workers are locating near station areas. The number of low-wage jobs also increased near station areas. These previously underserved areas of the Twin Cities have benefited from frequent, all-day transit service.

Case studies of 25 Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) projects were conducted to show how TOD helped enhance the well-being of working families by providing for increased transit access, good jobs, and affordable housing to low- and moderate-income people, including many who cannot afford to own a car. Incentive concepts can encourage location-efficient development; for example, not providing subsidies to employers unless jobs are transit-accessible and within a reasonable commuting distance from affordable housing.

Light rail transit users report higher levels of neighborhood satisfaction and have lower obesity rates than non-users.

Increased development intensity around rail stations will also allow for residents in new portions of the two-county region to complete many trips on foot or by bike in compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. In addition to the gas savings that these residents will experience by being able to walk to the store instead of drive, there will also be public health benefits through increasing amounts of active travel.

A qualitative study in an inner-city, revitalizing neighborhood Salt Lake City found study participants who used a new light rail stop reported higher "place attachment" and greater "neighborhood satisfaction" than did non-riders, suggesting that the transit stop improved their feelings about their community. Those who did not use the new transit stop at all were substantially more likely to be obese and to take more car trips than either new riders or existing riders.

Does rail reduce congestion or pollution? Does rail provide an alternative to people who like to drive their cars?

There are currently 46 cities in the U.S. with some form of rail transit. Rail accounts for more than 20% of total commutes in seven of these cities. While many cities with rail are still congested, they are less congested than comparable cities without rail. Cities with rail tend to be larger than the average city, and thus more congested than a smaller city, even with the public transit options. Mass transit can also reduce the rate at which congestion grows as a city expands.

Rail saves Americans $19.4 billion per year by reducing congestion. Households living near public transit drive 4,400 miles less annually on average than those without access to public transit. That equates to a savings of over $2,200 per year, or a savings of 19% of their travel expenses. Residents of the seven cities where rail accounts for 20% or more of commutes drive an average of 7,548 miles per year, compared to 11,992 nationally. Public transit also saves Americans a total of 646 million hours of travel time each year.

Public transportation reduces American consumption of gasoline by 4.2 billion gallons each year, more than 20 times the amount spilled into the Gulf of Mexico during the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe. This results in a corresponding reduction in pollution. Utilizing public transit is ten times more effective at reducing carbon dioxide emissions than many other household actions.

How is rail doing in today's down economy?

Public transit ridership has risen every year since 1996. In 2000, ridership was at its highest level since 1959. Public transit ridership was up a total of 1.56% in the first quarter of 2011, with light rail ridership up 2.34%. Some light rail systems saw increases of as much as 28.22%. Further, the proposed light rail system in the Triangle is only one component of a comprehensive mass transit system. In North Carolina, bus ridership was also up 3.26% in Charlotte, 11.48% in Greensboro, and 12.64% on the Triangle Transit Authority.

Has the high cost of fuel in Europe increase rail usage? Has increases in cost of fuel effected transit use in this country?

Europeans drive significantly less annually than Americans. In France, the average car travels 8,525.6 miles per year; in the U.K., 8,837.6 miles per year. In 2009, each car registered in North Carolina traveled an average of 17,240.9 miles. Households living near public transit drive an average of 4,400 miles annually less than those without access to public transit. This corresponds to an annual savings of over 200 gallons of gas per household.

Studies have shown that increases in gasoline prices result in an increase in public transit ridership. At $3.00 per gallon, fuel prices prompt an additional 500,000,000 passenger trips on public transit annually; at $5.00, that number jumps to 1.5 billion; at $6.00, 2.7 billion. This is not mere speculation: during the 2007 and 2008 gas price spike, 85% of transit agencies reported increased ridership, and one half expanded their capacity as a result. Even with expanded capacity, one half still experienced crowded service, with 39% having to turn passengers away at times.

Will rail development drive economic development to the transit stops?

Every $1 invested in public transit generates an economic return of $4. Within transit, rail is a better catalyst for economic growth because the infrastructure for rail is permanent. Developers and business owners can feel confident locating next to rail because it is highly likely that the service will still be present for years to come.

Rail alone generates $5.2 billion annually in economic and social benefits. It also saves the American public an average of $4.5 billion annually through avoided economic costs, including $1.7 billion annually by reducing traffic-related injuries and fatalities alone. A further $5.6 billion is saved from accident damages. Transit also saves $8 billion in roadway construction and $12.1 billion in parking costs.

Not only is public transit a good investment, but it outperforms roads and highways in terms of economic impact. A $10 million capital investment in public transit yields $30 million in increased business sales, while that same investment in roads and highways would generate a return of $27 million in goods and services. Consumer spending on public transit goes further as well. Every $1 million spent by consumers adds $1.82 million to the local economy; if consumers spent that same $1 million on gasoline it would add just $1.14 million to the economy.

Public transit is also a better job creator than roads and highways. The industry currently employs more than 380,000 individuals nationwide. An investment in public transit creates 9% more jobs than the same investment in road maintenance, and 19% more than new road construction. Every $1 billion invested in public transit creates 36,000 jobs, while investing that same amount in federal highway spending generates only 30,000 jobs. Every $1 million spent by consumers on public transit generates 31.3 jobs, while that same $1 million spent on gas generates only 12.8 jobs. These numbers aren't just theoretical. The American Investment and Recovery Act invested roughly $20 billion in public transit, and created 71,415 job-months in the process. Every $1 billion invested in public transportation created 16,419 job-months, while every $1 billion invested in highway infrastructure programs created only 8,781 job-months.

Can we learn from the experience in Charlotte?

Charlotte's Lynx commuter rail system was completed in two years. During its first year in operation, ridership was more than double expectations. Within a year, the system was averaging 16,000 riders daily. The system is so popular that officials had to expand parking lots at park-and-ride stations. Ridership on Charlotte's light rail system was up 0.52% in the first quarter of 2011.

The system has been so popular that officials are planning to build upon its success in accordance with their long-range transit plan. Officials are planning the construction of a streetcar in uptown Charlotte with federal funding. They are also completing construction of a new line to UNC-Charlotte that should open by 2017. Even after cuts to proposed expansion caused by the economic downturn, the city is moving ahead with the $1.2 billion expansion.

Are Durham and Chapel Hill ready for light rail?

In 2008, following years of intense analysis, the Special Transit Advisory Commission determined that the highest level of future travel intensity of any of the 18 corridors in Wake, Durham or Orange counties – was in the Durham-Orange corridor. The D-O corridor also has the highest concentration of transit dependent households, is constrained from further road development by the New Hope Creek corridor and the Jordan Lake game lands and has the highest cross county public transportation usage in the state. This decision has been confirmed by 7 more years of study, analysis and public input. One that fulfills a community-wide vision of compact, walkable neighborhoods; dense, vibrant downtowns; world class universities and medical centers and a more environmentally responsible community.

Durham and Chapel Hill have much higher usage rates of existing bus transit than similar mid-size cities and even larger ones. Every day in Durham and Chapel Hill in 2013, people took over 71,300 rides on Duke Transit, GoDurham, Chapel Hill Transit, and GoTriangle services. Durham and Chapel Hill already carry nearly as many transit passengers as Charlotte did the year before Charlotte's light rail opened, even though Charlotte had an additional quarter million residents. Durham and Chapel Hill will also grow for another 10 years before light rail begins operation.

How will DOLRT reduce travel times on transit for current bus riders?

D-O LRT will provide significant time savings for many transit users currently using buses in Durham and Chapel Hill. The DOLRT is more direct than several of the bus routes it will replace, and by operating in its own right of way, it will not be subject to traffic congestion. Electric-powered light rail also has superior acceleration to a standard diesel or hybrid bus.

An additional time savings is not having to located parking. In the major employment centers along the D-O LRT line, parking is expensive, or scarce, and in some places, simply not available. As our universities, medical centers and downtowns continue to grow, it will not be possible to provide more parking capacity without building distant satellite lots.

Can we pave our way out of the population expansion?

In city after city in the United States, it has been demonstrated that each new highway or highway lane draws more traffic until it, too, is congested. Increased street capacity encourages sprawl, puts more drivers on the road and ultimately lengthens travel times. Buses, carpools and vanpools can help. But they use the same roads as other commuters, and don't offer a congestion free commute. Light rail in its own right-of-way provides reliable travel times, unlike roads.

Rapid transit provides an alternative to congestion. While we will always need to widen and improve roads, we cannot pave our way out of congestion with roads alone. There are limits to how much a given road can be widened without destroying neighborhoods and open space. However, extra cars can be added to the engine with no additional infrastructure.

Imagine the future without light rail for western Durham County and eastern Orange County. We will have to add at least 6 more lanes of road which could be accomplished adding 2 lanes for Highway 54, Old Chapel Hill Road and Erwin Road. Think of the destruction of open space, the environment and quality of life in those corridors.

What about Bus Rapid Transit?

Several cities in South America have installed bus rapid transit systems (BRT). An example is Bogotá, Colombia. The following is a photograph of rush hour in Bogotá. Although BRT is far superior to multilane highways because it avoids the congestion caused by cars competing for the right of way, each bus in line has a driver, has its own engine and rubber tires. It is also spewing fossil fuel exhaust, has slow acceleration, and is traveling in a right of way that cost the same as a rail right of way.

These economies of scale generated by LRT show up in operating statistics of other transit agencies that have already built light rail. In Portland, Minneapolis, Dallas, Denver and Sacramento, the cost per passenger trip by bus ranges from 4% to 57% more for bus than for light rail.

In addition to being more expensive than light rail, BRT is not as permanent as light rail and does not spur investment along bus routes in a way that light rail does. Light rail development often creates more accessible, mixed-use communities that benefit non-drivers

General Support

Durham is facing a transportation "Perfect Storm." Our way of life, our prosperity, and that of our children is at stake. With our projected population boom, people and businesses will be plagued with long commutes, congestion and the lack of transportation choices. Building more roads is not the answer. The regions that we are competing with for new industry and better jobs are already investing in transit. For Durham to compete, we need a transit system that will move people, goods and services quickly and dependably.

As we sprawl, we are devouring farm land, forests and open space. We are polluting our air and our water. We are harming our health and ruining what makes Durham a great place to live and raise a family. As we sprawl, increasing infrastructure costs are draining our the financial resources needed to sustain basic services as well as the arts, cultural and natural resources. We need a transit system which will encourage good land use.

Our family budgets are being squeezed by the costs of commuting. Many people cannot afford to commute by car. Many people cannot become productive members of our society because they lack basic transportation. We need a transit system that will move everyone efficiently and economically.

Our challenge is to build a transit system which makes us a world class place to live, work and raise a family. We cannot wait because it is only going to get worse and the costs will only go up.

The Plan calls for a regional transit system which starts with a substantial increase in both bus service and the quality of the bus riding experience, followed in the next few years by rail service focused on our most congested travel corridors. The land use strategies it supports will be more efficient, environmentally friendly, and will reduce our dependence on expensive fossil fuels. The addition of commuter rail to the plan will mean train service by 2018 to Research Triangle Park (with connections to the airport), Raleigh, and eastern Wake County in a cost effective manner. Light rail to Chapel Hill and Memorial Hospital in 10-12 years will be an exciting part of the future.

We believe the Plan positions Durham County and the Triangle to retain their position as a highly-competitive place for innovation and job creation, a place where young people will want to pursue their careers and where every citizen will have a way to get to work, whether or not they have a car. The Plan increases travel choices, improves environmental impact, creates jobs (nearly 7,000 construction jobs) and helps us compete for new business, which expects this for their workforce. In addition, based on experience in Charlotte and other communities around the country, we expect to see a substantial investment at rail stations with associated increase in tax base and jobs.

Our parents and grandparents were the visionaries who made the RDU International Airport, the Research Triangle Park, and other things we take for granted realities. It is time for us to make this investment for our future and that of other generations.

Light rail typically offers a congestion-free commute with consistent travel times, so it attracts a very diverse customer base. Over the past decade, cities that have added light rail service to their existing bus systems have experienced significant increases in new customers. Light rail has proved to appeal to people who previously drove alone and former bus riders who like rail transits speed. Actual results from light rail lines opened in the past 10-15 years show that ridership exceeds projections.

Thank you,

Linda Smith

Opposition to Light rail

Avery Goldstein

Sent: 10/12/2015 2:59 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.org, council@durhamnc.gov, commissioners@dconc.gov, john.t.thomas.jr@usace.army.mil, rob.ridings@ncdenr.gov, vanderwiele.cynthia@epa.gov

I write to voice my strong opposition to Light Rail in general and also for the maintenance facility on Farrington Road. I find the idea of the project fiscally and environmentally irresponsible and the project specifically states that it will not help the traffic problems that exist on hwy 54. Families and schools exist on the proposed land and building an industrial facility in a beautiful, family-friendly area of Durham makes no sense. There are significant areas of downtown that need revitalization and this type of facility makes sense in an area that is already industrial. Please help Durham make good decisions and oppose this entire project.
Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Ana Gomez Email: Telephone:

Mailing Address: City: Durham Zip Code: 27704

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
3. *Mail a letter to D-O LRT Project - DEIS, C/O GoTriangle, Post Office Box 530, Morrisville, NC 27560*
4. *Submit a written comment form at two public information sessions and two public hearings.*
5. *Sign-up to speak at a public hearing.*

All methods of commenting will receive equal weight. All comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the development of the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Record of Decision (ROD), which is expected in February 2016. A response to substantive comments will be included in the combined FEIS/ROD.

Be advised that your entire comment, including name, address, phone number, email address, or any other personal identifying information in your comment may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Act (N.C.G.S. § 132.1 et seq.).

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Yo creo que es una buena idea.

Please Turn Over →

Get Involved Contact Form

Blanca J. Gonzalez

Sent: 10/8/2015 11:56 AM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Blanca J. Gonzalez

Phone Number:

Message Body:
We're in TOTAL support of better (more efficient) public transp. everywhere! Vehicles are WAY too expensive (payments, maintenance,, & insurance costs) & not everyone can afford or is able to drive. Being mindful of others means & situations is VERY important. Need to consider what is best on the long run for the environment & everyone's pockets. Roads are congested with traffic from cars.

Please see plan does come through!

Thanks...

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Get Involved Contact Form

Nancy Gordon

Sent: 9/29/2015 1:28 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Nancy Gordon

Phone Number:

.c

Message Body:
I appreciate that the Farrington Road site is the presently recommended site for the ROMF. In the event that designation is unsuccessful, please consider that the Cornwallis site should not be the substitute site. The land that would be lost by the Jewish Federation/Jewish Center is the only land that exists continguous with the campus and it's an integral part of our future business expansion plans. Additionally, moving Western Blvd so that it's closer to, if not adjacent to, the JCC property where youth summer camps, the Lerner Day School and the Charter School on the corner, will creat a hazard for the minor children who attend those schools and programming.
I am grateful that you've listened to our various members with respect. The ROMF and relocation of Western Blvd would be terrible for the Jewish campus. Thank you.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

MR. JOYNER: Anyone who has a speaker card with the number 2 on it, if you would please go on back and come over to the side and Jeffrey will make sure that you are in the correct order and ready to speak.

Okay, ma'am. Thank you.

MS. NANCY GORDAN: Thank you. My

name is Nancy Gordan. I live at in Durham. I've lived in Durham for 35 years, and I love this community.

I have gotten involved in the discussions about the ROMF because one of the proposed sites was Cornwalis Road. I am an active member of the Judea Reform Congregation. I am on the board at the Jewish Federation which occupies the same building that's used by the Jewish Community Center.

Part of what I want to do is thank the people at GoTransit and the elected officials who listened and asked -- when we said we own land that had not actually been put in our name yet but that land not to be taken by eminent domain to complete the Cornwalis Road ROMF.

That would create a real problem, both that eminent domain raises lawsuits and, secondly, because that is the only land that that entire campus has to complete our business development plan.

So that was kind of critical to us. It's two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half acres of land.

The other thing is, is the moving of Western Boulevard, which would, per the plan, be moved closer to a charter school, Lerner Day School and the Jewish Community Center which has summer camps. But the hazards that that raised -- that that would raise are fairly clear. Everything else that has been raised by our campus has really fallen under the similar complaints that other sites have raised, construction won't be easy, there -- there are concerns about light and vibration and all of that.

What I'd like to do is thank the people from GoTransit and our elected officials for listening to us very respectfully, and we hope that the respect has been reciprocal, that our community has addressed you all respectfully.

And many of the staff of GoTransit that are here, thank you. You've been

great in terms of just listening. We don't always agree, but that's how politics work. So thank you very much.

MR. JOYNER: Thank you.

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Margaret Gresham Email: ephone:

Mailing Address: City: CH Zip Code: 27517

Chapel Hill NC

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
3. *Mail a letter to D-O LRT Project - DEIS, C/O GoTriangle, Post Office Box 530, Morrisville, NC 27560*
4. *Submit a written comment form at two public information sessions and two public hearings.*
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Be advised that your entire comment, including name, address, phone number, email address, or any other personal identifying information in your comment may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Act (N.C.G.S. § 132.1 et seq.).

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Read opinion and research by UNC + Duke professors. Lt Rail will be obsolete in 10 years. Waste of taxpayers money. Infrastructure will harm communities and is not friendly to the landscape. Noise + pollution will be negative. Please do NOT build light rail and do not put the abomination in my neighborhood. My community will be destroyed by the maintenance facility on Farrington Road.

Please Turn Over →

OurTransit FUTURE

comment on DO LRT DEIS

Geoffrey F. Green

Sent: 10/5/2015 10:06 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Cc: "Alison Stuebe

Hello:

I am a resident of Chapel Hill and live in the Meadowmont neighborhood near the proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project. Overall, I support the project due to its potential to have a significant impact on the future development of land uses along this active section of the Research Triangle where transit is already heavily used, and because it will provide a reliable, frequent and safe transportation alternative for me, my wife, and my children.

During an earlier phase of the project, I had advocated for the adoption of the proposed C1 alignment through Meadowmont. I understand and agree with the decision to move forward with the C2A alternative that keeps the alignment outside of Meadowmont, for the reasons stated in the DEIS. However, because of this decision I have a significantly longer trip from my home to the station. Therefore, I request that during the engineering phase of the D-O LRT Project, project staff make their best effort to design good pedestrian and bicycle facilities to connect the Meadowmont neighborhood to the D-O LRT system, coordinating with the Meadowmont neighborhood and the Town of Chapel Hill as staff deem appropriate. There is an existing pedestrian tunnel under NC 54 and the Basis for Engineering drawings included in the DEIS indicate an extension of the tunnel and a relocation of the existing trail; this would be an excellent option. Another good choice would be the provision of pedestrian facilities to cross NC 54 at Meadowmont Lane/Friday Center Drive. Multiple options would be best, of course, if deemed reasonable and appropriate.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my comment, and have a nice day.

Very truly yours,

Geoffrey F. Green

Get Involved Contact Form

Jim Green

Sent: 10/10/2015 3:53 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Jim Green

Phone Number:

Email Address

Message Body:
I am writing to comment on the DEIS for the D-O LRT and to express my support in favor of the NO BUILD OPTION. The project as it is currently conceived is based on fundamentally unsound ridership projections and will not result in any appreciable reduction in automobile congestion in the Chapel Hill-Durham road corridor. In fact, in other urban centers around this country, the introduction of light rail primarily shifts ridership from buses to light rail, without significantly decreasing automobile traffic.

Furthermore, the routing of the proposed light rail track is not aligned with the higher density compact neighborhood developments in Orange and Chatham counties, including the Ephesus-Ford, Glenn Lennox and Obey Village communities. Lastly, there is no incentive to take light rail to reduce travel time between Durham and Chapel Hill, with an estimated LRT time of 42-44 minutes end to end, versus a projected automobile commuting time of 27 minutes in 2035. And this does not include automobile commuting time to the station parking lots, parking time and walking time to the platform, and waiting time on the platform for the next train. This is neither convenient nor does it reduce automobile congestion.

Academic studies reviewing the cost and feasibility of light rail projects across the USA indicate that most of these projects require an annual 70% taxpayer subsidy, as the ridership farebox collection only supports a small percentage of the annual operating costs. The 1.6 billion dollar capital cost associated with this project is not a responsible use of scare resources for mass transit development, and can be better allocated in a region of low population density (Chapel Hill-Durham) with increased investment in conventional bus service, which has the flexibility of deployment to actual growth areas, versus projected growth areas.

A research working paper from the University of California-Berkeley, which analyzed urban light rail mass transit, indicated that a population density of 30 people per gross acre, or roughly 19,000 people per square mile (ppsm), was necessary in order to support light rail transit. The Chapel Hill-Durham corridor has a population density less than 20% of that threshold, with a current density of approximately 3,000 ppsm, which is predicted to rise to 4000 ppsm in 2035. This is not a recipe for success.

The ridership projections for the D-O LRT are wildly optimistic, with estimated daily boardings of 23,000. This is in contrast to the Charlotte LRT system, with daily boardings of 16,000 (which has been static since inception in 2007, while the population has increased 17%, with no measurable decrease in traffic congestion), in a area with a population that is 70% larger than the Triangle area. These ridership projections are further inflated with the working assumption that 40% of households in the Durham-Chapel Hill corridor will not own automobiles in 2040, which flies in the face of current ownership levels and assumes a massive change in public behavior, which is then used to justify an overly optimistic ridership utilization.

Just looking at the current utilization of the Robertson Scholars Express Bus between Duke University and UNC indicates a very low level of utilization, serving only 350 boardings per day, with buses running every 30 minutes between campus for 16 hours each weekday. This equates to an average of only 5 riders per bus, which is well below capacity. Why would this magically increase with the introduction of light rail, with a transit time that is longer than the current bus option?

For all these reasons and more, I support the NO BUILD OPTION. The projected growth in the Triangle is predominately weighted toward Wake County, and Wake County, with a much larger population than Orange or Durham Counties has rejected the Light Rail option in favor of Bus Rapid Transit and Diesel Rail Rapid Transit, using established rail corridors and new bus rapid transit lanes, without incurring the unsustainable economic costs associated with light rail. Let's learn from Wake County and make smart choices for Durham and Orange counties when it comes to mass transit resources. The population density is not sufficient to justify an investment in light rail.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

mail opened 19-06-2015

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: KATHARINE J. GROSSCUP Email: Telephone:

Mailing Address: City: Chapel Hill NC Zip Code: 27517

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
3. *Mail a letter to D-O LRT Project - DEIS, C/O GoTriangle, Post Office Box 530, Morrisville, NC 27560*
4. *Submit a written comment form at two public information sessions and two public hearings.*
5. *Sign-up to speak at a public hearing.*

All methods of commenting will receive equal weight. All comments will be reviewed and considered as part of the development of the combined Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Record of Decision (ROD), which is expected in February 2016. A response to substantive comments will be included in the combined FEIS/ROD.

Be advised that your entire comment, including name, address, phone number, email address, or any other personal identifying information in your comment may be subject to the North Carolina Public Records Act (N.C.G.S. § 132.1 et seq.).

Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

I AM OPPOSED TO THE LIGHT RAIL PROJECT IT IS UNNECESSARY.
IT IS TOO EXPENSIVE AND WILL COST TAX PAYERS TOO MUCH.
IT WILL BE NOISY AND WILL DISTURB THE PEACE AND SERENITY OF
CHAPEL HILL. IT WILL SCAR THE ENVIRONMENT.

(nothing on reverse)
1 page only

Please Turn Over →

OurTransit FUTURE

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Ruth Guardado | Email: | lephone:

Mailing Address: | City: Durham | Zip Code: 27707

How to Comment on the DEIS

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Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Pienso que es una buena forma de transportarse.

Please Turn Over ⟶

Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Official Public Comment

Name: Guillermo Guerrero Email:

Mailing Address: Durham Zip Code: 27713

How to Comment on the DEIS

1. *Email us at info@ourtransitfuture.com*
2. *Submit a web-based comment form: ourtransitfuture.com/comment*
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Please leave your comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Please Turn Over →

MR. WIB GOWEY: Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Wib Gowey. I live at Durham, North Carolina. And I'm speaking today representing CAN, the Congregations Associations & Neighborhoods, a city-wide organization here in Durham. It's a non-profit. It's made up of approximately 15,000 households in Durham.

And CAN has gone on record solidly in support of the Durham-Orange light rail system, very happy to see the progress it's been making and look forward to

seeing it built.

CAN also will be submitting for the record later today a petition with over 310 signatures of Durham residents in support of this project.

I only have a few other comments to share. One is that I understand these projects having different views. If you look around the country, you don't escape that. There's always some discussion and argument within communities about building these. There always has been.

I am -- As I sit here and listen, I'm very disappointed to hear the poor information that's out there and the things that are just wrong that people have been somehow led into believing about this. And it's too bad, and I can't correct all that this afternoon, particularly in two minutes. But I am aware of the very careful study that's been done by the GoTriangle staff and am very appreciative of that hard work for years that's gone into this.

Know that this route's going to take the most heavily traveled corridors in Durham and Orange County and provide an answer to being in congestion all the time.

I understand that BRT -- if you know anything about BRT, running BRTs is as expensive as light rail to build and more expensive to operate. That's just the facts. That's not an opinion.

But I do know this also, that Durham County voted for this with 60-percent majority and Orange County did, too, in the last couple of years, and I want to assure all of those who are working on this that a strong majority of folks in Durham County and Orange County still support this. Thank you all so much.

Get Involved Contact Form

Wib Gulley

Sent: 10/3/2015 3:52 PM

To: info@ourtransitfuture.com

Name: Wib Gulley

Phone Number

Message Body:
North Carolina was the sixth fastest growing state in the US in the last decade, and the pace of population and traffic growth continues unabated. Durham and Orange counties have and will continue to receive a disproportionately large share of the travel demand growth in our state. Our region urgently needs a transportation option like the DOLRT. I am aware of the years of careful study and analysis that have gone into the DEIS for the DOLRT, and I am very supportive of this project. I urge the FTA to allow GoTriangle to move this project forward into the Engineering phase of development.

--
This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Our Transit Future (http://ourtransitfuture.com)

Dr. and Mrs. Robert A. Gutman

Durham NC 27701

September 28, 2015

Mr. Jeff Mann
General Manager
GoTriangle
P.O. Box 13787
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Subject: Support for Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) Project

Dear Mr. Mann:

Dr. Charles Cooperberg and I own property on Pettigrew between Erwin Rd and Swift Ave; and our patients come there for dialysis treatment. The patients need for free and readily available access appears to be safely guaranteed and assured following modifications to the original plan that were managed extremely well Ms. Juanita Shearer-Swink and her team. While the LRT itself will probably neither help nor hinder care for those patients, we have become very aware of the necessity for modernization of traffic for the future. These reasons include but are not limited to these factors with which we agree:

- To remain competitive in today's global economy, we must invest in modern transportation infrastructure. The D-O LRT Project will provide a 21st Century transportation system which the people in Durham and Orange Counties need to get to work each day, educate their families and build a healthy and secure future. Furthermore, the NEPA Preferred Alternative included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement reflects choices that are appropriate for our area, based on sound technical analysis, collaboration with federal, state and local government agencies and input from the public.

- The population in Durham and Orange Counties is anticipated to grow by 64% and 52% respectively, over the next 30 years. In the Durham-Orange (D-O) corridor the population is expected to double. This growth is fueled by our major colleges and universities including Duke, NCCU, UNC and Durham Technical Community College and by the Duke and Durham VA Medical Centers, UNC Hospitals and our other medical and research facilities.

- The D-O LRT Project will offer dependable, affordable and time competitive transit service within the D-O Corridor. And, it will provide a much-needed alternative to the corridor's increasingly congested roadway network, which includes NC 147, Erwin Road, US 15-501, I-40, NC 54 and Fordham Boulevard.

- The mobility options provided by the D-O LRT Project will improve access to more job opportunities and expand the workforce available to local employers. It will also enhance our attractiveness to future businesses and industries that are looking for the well educated and highly trained men and women that call our region home

- We look forward the implementation of the D-O LRT Project. This project is a great example of the modern infrastructure investments that we need to undertake. As jobs are created and this region continues to grow, the D-O LRT Project will help to shape a more equitable future, keeping this area competitive and well connected.

In addition to these comments, we offer the following additional thoughts:

- We both also happen to be members of the Jewish Community Center and Judea Reform Congregation. The recent affirmed decision to avoid placing the ROMF in that site at Cornwallis is very important to the activities of those institutions. We are grateful.

- I have tried to read and understand the details in the comprehensive plan regarding the impact at Pettigrew between Erwin and Swift. It appears to me (I acknowledge that reading such a document is not part of my skill set)that your analysis summarized in particular on pages K11-48 and K11-57 suggests a degradation of flow of traffic coming north on Swift Ave. If that is correct, I urge seeking a solution, as that will adversely affect coming and going in the area of the dialysis unit.

- The diagrammatic representation from the same document and attached, suggests Pettigrew is going to be closed up to Swift from Erwin. Please comment.

We hope the funding problem for this important project will be resolved.

Sincerely,

Robert Gutman
Charles Cooperberg