

## Does GoTriangle need a bigger bus? It's testing a cushier coach on longer express routes.

The News and Observer By Richard Stradling July 31, 2018

RALEIGH – GoTriangle says some of its long-distance express routes between Triangle cities have gotten so crowded that it might buy bigger buses.

GoTriangle is now test driving a 45-foot-long coach bus that seats 54 people, nearly 20 more than the traditional 40-foot city buses that make up the fleet now. The regional transit agency is using the bus on express routes between Chapel Hill and Raleigh and Durham and Raleigh, and getting feedback from riders.

"If you look at our longer runs between Durham and Raleigh and Chapel Hill and Raleigh, in some cases people are standing today, which can be uncomfortable for that distance," Pat Stephens, GoTriangle's director of transit operations, said in a statement. "If we have a bus that allows more people to have a seat on I-40, it might encourage more people to get out of their cars and try the bus on some of our most congested corridors."

The bus, a prototype made by Motor Coach Industries or MCI of Des Plaines, Ill., looks more like a Greyhound or a tour bus than a traditional city bus. It has bigger, cushier seats, overhead storage bins for bags and easier access for wheelchairs.

Bob Spaziano of Raleigh has ridden the MCI coach twice during his daily commute from Raleigh to downtown Durham, where he works for Duke Clinical Research Institute. Spaziano says the bus has a quieter, smoother ride than traditional ones, making it nicer to work on his laptop during his commute. And he finds the cushioned, contoured seats more comfortable, too, though he said not all of his fellow passengers thought so.

"One larger woman in the group mentioned that for people with larger posteriors the old bus might be better," he said.

Rider comfort will be just one factor in GoTriangle's decision whether to go with a coach bus. The MCI coach costs more — between \$600,000 and \$650,000, depending on features, compared to about \$470,000 for a 40-foot bus. But the larger bus is expected to last 14 to 16 years, two to four years longer than the traditional bus, and could allow GoTriangle to use fewer buses on some routes.

"The key question is whether the use of higher-capacity coaches on our routes is something that brings about value for our customers as well as whether it could save us money in the long term," Stephens said.

The larger coaches would make sense only on GoTriangle's express routes, which make few stops and spend little time on crowded, narrow city streets.

GoTriangle will be testing the coach through Aug. 20. About 2,000 passengers have ridden it so far, and more than 100 have filled out surveys either on the bus or at [publicinput.com/demobus](http://publicinput.com/demobus).

## Can't find a parking space in downtown Durham? Here's what the city might do next

The Herald-Sun By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan July 30, 2018

DURHAM – Looking for a parking space in downtown Durham? There are 19,000 of them, but less than half are public. (CONTINUED...)

A yearlong study of downtown parking has come up with new ideas as more people continue moving to and working in the city.

Shuttles, grace periods, public valet parking and parking for driverless cars are all things city leaders will consider to handle your future trips downtown. Satellite parking with shuttles were the highest priority for those surveyed at a downtown parking open house this year.

If you're out to dinner and parked at a 2-hour meter, would you pay a higher rate to stay a third hour? That's one option shared by Iain Banks of Nelson Nygaard, the San Francisco-based consultants who studied downtown Durham parking.

Parking meters could change their rates by the number of hours or location. Downtown meters are limited to 2-hour maximums now, and end at 7 p.m. One recommendation is to end 2-hour time limits at 4 p.m., because people who park downtown in the evenings stay longer.

Banks said a 15-minute grace period is ideal for parking enforcement, letting someone grab a coffee or run a quick errand without getting ticketed.

Banks also said the city should prepare for autonomous vehicles in the next 10 to 15 years and figure out how they will park curbside.

Dockless scooter systems could arrive even sooner, he added. Those have already arrived in Raleigh, and Durham could be next.

### **How much parking is there?**

The city's 2,024 on-street parking spaces downtown are busiest in the afternoon. Here is the breakdown:

**8 a.m. to noon:** 1,369 vacant parking spaces and 655 occupied spaces.

**Noon to 4 p.m.:** 1,046 vacant parking spaces and 978 occupied spaces.

**4 to 8 p.m.:** 1,315 vacant parking spaces and 709 occupied spaces.

Parking analyst Robert Williams said that system-wide, there's roughly 5,700 public spaces overall downtown.

"We don't recommend that every space should be full," he said, with 90 percent considered "functionally full."

That number will change when [all the current construction projects, including the new city-owned mixed-use parking garage at Morgan and Mangum streets](#), are done.

It's estimated those projects will add 3,700 spaces, according to the study.

And then there are two surface parking lots owned by the county at 300 and 500 E. Main St., where redevelopment plans just in the discussion phase call for housing and [parking garages](#).

Among the study's key findings:

- Business owners think the current pricing hurts small-business employees who work less than a traditional work week at lower wages.
- Residents believe there is a shortage of short-term parking, particularly to run errands, as well as a lack of dedicated longterm spaces for residents. Community groups say it is difficult to find parking at and near high-demand locations. (CONTINUED...)

A number of off-street parking spaces fill up by early weekday afternoons, including the Chapel Hill Street garage and surface lot, the Corcoran Street garage and surface lot, the YMCA, West Village, Durham Center for Senior Life, Heritage Square Shopping Center and three city and county owned lots.

- Employee parking utilizes prime parking spaces with daylong occupancy downtown, which limits the availability of convenient visitor and customer parking.

While the study focused on parking cars, it did suggest ways to decrease demand: public transit and bicycle facilities improvements and better pedestrian safety and access.

The last parking study was done in 2012. There will be more public input sessions about downtown parking before the final recommendations are presented to the City Council.

“What’s the most urgent thing that we need to be thinking about?” City Manager Tom Bonfield asked. Banks said talking with private developers and owners is the place to start, and that some have already expressed interest in working with the city on making more parking available.

#### **What’s next**

The transportation study isn’t done yet, with more public input sessions being planned. Read an overview of the parking study here: [parkdurham.org](http://parkdurham.org).

## **Record office construction and rising rates in Triangle**

The Triangle Business Journal By Ben Graham July 26, 2018

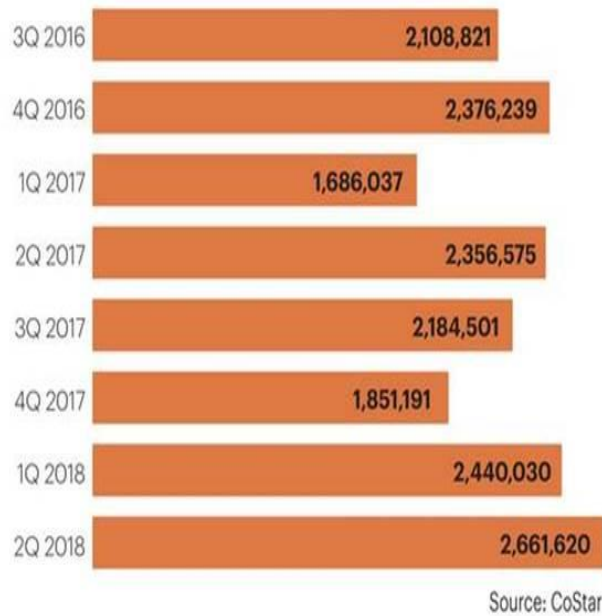
With cranes dotting the skylines above downtown Raleigh and Durham, it should come as no surprise that construction is booming. But the latest numbers show just how much activity is taking place in the Triangle’s urban cores.

A new report from CBRE puts total office space under construction in the second quarter at a “record-setting” 2.66 million square feet. That is up from 2.44 million square feet in the first quarter and 2.35 million square feet in the second quarter of last year, according to the report, which uses data from CoStar. JLL released slightly different numbers earlier this year that show a similar trend.

Much of that growth is driven by buildings underway in downtown Durham, including the 27-story One City Center, the 350,000-square-foot Durham Innovation District buildings, also known as Durham.ID, and the 11-story 555 Mangum tower.

Combined, downtown Durham construction accounts for 36 percent of all office activity in the Triangle, the reports states. (CONTINUED...)

## OFFICE CONSTRUCTION BY QUARTER BY SQ. FT.



[Enlarge](#)

Office construction hit a new high in the second quarter of 2018.

While new towers continue to rise around the Triangle, absorption remains strong at a positive 524,906 square feet. “We’re absorbing it as we’re building it, nothing is being over-built,” says Brad Corsemeier, CBRE executive vice president.

Office rates have responded accordingly, continuing to climb to new heights. A report earlier this month by JLL found average office lease rates surpassing \$25 per square foot across the Triangle, and around \$32 per square foot in downtown Raleigh and Durham. CBRE’s latest report shows rents reaching similar heights, calculating that the average rent for available Class A office space in downtown Raleigh is \$32.08, an 8 percent increase over last year.

Given the low vacancy rates and continued job and population growth taking place across the Triangle, Corsemeier doesn’t expect the upward pressures on office lease pricing to slow any time soon.

“We are not far off from seeing \$40 rents in office space,” he says. “You can quote me on that.”

Even as prices rise here, the Triangle will remain a value deal for companies looking to move from more expensive markets in places like California and the Northeast, Corsemeier says.

Vacancy was just under 10 percent for the quarter, down from more than 14 percent as recently as the third quarter of 2016.

## The new highway in Durham: What it looks like and when it will open

The Herald-Sun By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan July 18, 2018

DURHAM—If you drive between Durham and Raleigh, you should have a new, faster route late next year.

It's a highway 60 years in the making.

The East End Connector will link two major roads in Durham: N.C. 147 and U.S. 70. It will bring a faster route between Interstates 40 and 85, too.

Commuters on N.C. 147, known as the Durham Freeway, and U.S. 70 in East Durham have watched the construction for three years. The 3.9-mile connector will have 16 new bridges, a flyover and three roundabouts.

[The East End Connector](#) is scheduled to open in November 2019 at a cost of \$150 million, said N.C. Department of Transportation engineer Cameron Richards.

By 2035, the average daily traffic on the connector will be 116,100 vehicles. In 2015, daily traffic in the area was 65,700, according to NCDOT.

If it stays on schedule, the East End Connector will open 60 years after it was pitched. And it'll have a new name: Interstate 885.

### History of the project

In 1959, Dwight D. Eisenhower was president. The Research Triangle Park was founded. The Disney movie "Sleeping Beauty" came out.

And the city of Durham introduced the East End Connector to its thoroughfare plan.

So why has it taken so long? Other priorities and money. Sometimes money went to N.C. 147 instead.

The Freeway was funded by a 1962 bond referendum, with the first part finishing in 1970. More exits were added into the 1990s.

In the late 1990s, interest in the connector resurfaced, and NCDOT studied it again. But still, no money. It showed up again in project lists in 2003 and 2005. Then NCDOT put it in the 2009-15 Transportation Improvement Plan, and this time it stuck. Ground broke in 2015.

### Roundabouts and a flyover

The three roundabouts will be part of a new interchange off of U.S. 70, said Richards, the NCDOT engineer. They will connect U.S. 70 with South Miami Boulevard and East End Avenue, which had previously connected with U.S. 70 before construction began.

The flyover bridge will be from southbound N.C. 147 onto the connector, with an exit ramp on the northbound side. The connector will meet N.C. 147 between the Briggs Avenue and Ellis Road exits.

Once the new highway opens in late 2019, another six months of work will be spent on growing grass on the slopes and medians around the roadway.

Richards said a big plus of the project is that there has not been a good connection from N.C. 147 to Interstate 85. The connector will meet U.S. 70 within about a mile of Interstate 85.

"They're trying to connect the interstate system a little better," he said.

## **Downtown Durham parking lots near light-rail stop could become 400 new apartments**

The Herald-Sun By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan July 18, 2018

DURHAM—More apartments in downtown Durham — including affordable housing — are planned within a few blocks of a proposed light rail station.

Two development plans for county-owned land call for more than 400 new apartments on the 300 and 500 block of East Main Street. Both sites are now parking lots. And the plans call for more parking, with a garage on each site, too.

With help from the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government, Durham County leaders have devised two plans, and are asking for the public to tell them what they think. The first of three public input sessions was held Tuesday night at the county's Health and Human Services building on East Main Street, across Dillard Street from the 500 block parking lot.

About 30 people attended, with several praising the amount of affordable housing, but questioning the need for so much parking planned for both sites. Parking will serve both county employees and residents of the new buildings. The land is a few blocks from the planned light rail station at Dillard and Pettigrew streets.

### **The two plans**

In both development proposals, the plan for the 500 block of East Main Street is the same: 160 market rate apartments ranging from studios to three-bedrooms in one building, 180 units of affordable housing in another building, and a parking garage in the middle of it. The affordable housing units will be aimed at people earning from 30 percent of the area median income, which means public housing vouchers could be used, to 80 percent of the area median income.

Durham Congregations, Neighborhoods and Associations calls the land a “powerful opportunity to transform publicly owned land to develop affordable housing in downtown Durham.” Durham CAN has successfully lobbied for affordable housing on two city-owned properties downtown. Now it's focused on the county-owned properties.

The median household income in Durham from 2012-16, [according to the U.S. Census, is \\$54,093](#). For a three-person household, 80 percent of the area median income, or AMI, in the Durham-Chapel Hill Metro Area is \$50,900 a year. At 50 percent AMI, the income is \$31,850, and at 30 percent, that household income is \$20,160.

Where the two development plans split are in what to do with the surface parking lot on the 300 block of East Main Street. Plan A calls for 152 market-rate units including 400-square foot “micro units” to studios and one-bedrooms. The “assumed market rate” rents in plans for those apartments range from \$1,000 to \$1,420 per month. That plan also has space for a daycare or pre-K and commercial space, but no affordable housing.

Plan B for the 300 block does have affordable housing — 97 units of it for households at 80 percent AMI for one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. It also has commercial space. Both plans for the 300 block include a parking garage with more than 1,500 spaces for county employees and some greenspace.

Households are considered housing “cost-burdened” if they pay more than 30 percent of gross household income on housing-related expenses, which includes rent, mortgage, utilities, insurance and taxes.

County commissioners told Durham CAN they supported their proposal to include affordable housing on the downtown land.

Casey Stanton of Durham CAN said Tuesday that she credits the county, and Commissioner Ellen Reckhow in particular, for wanting to be part of the solution to affordable housing in downtown Durham and not keep the land just for parking lots. (CONTINUED...)

### **'Happy with both options'**

"We're pretty happy with both options. We like the second option better," Stanton said, because it calls for affordable housing at both sites.

"Guaranteed long-term affordability is really our hope," she said.

At the other end of downtown, another CAN-supported affordable housing project is planned for city-owned land at the corner of Jackson and Pettigrew streets, and the city will sell the old Durham Police Department headquarters on West Chapel Hill Street contingent on developers creating affordable housing on that land, too.

The county's "guiding public interests" for the land call for:

- Parking for Durham County Health and Human Services employees and customers.
- Incorporating options for multiple modes of transportation because it's near a future light rail station.
- Increasing affordable housing downtown for households earning 80 percent Area Median Income (AMI) and below in a mixed income and multi-generational setting.
- Providing ground-floor commercial and service offerings for tenants and workers in and around the sites and increasing activity along East Main Street.
- Maximizing public benefits and attract private investment.
- Focusing on pedestrian-scale design that creates a vibrant, urban streetscape along East Main Street.

No county commissioners attended the public input session this week, but they will get a report of all the sessions before deciding on which plan to pursue.

### **What's next**

There will be two more community input sessions about the parking lots on the 300 and 500 blocks of East Main Street:

- Saturday, July 28: 10 a.m. to noon at the Criminal Justice Resource Center, 326 E. Main St.
- Thursday, Aug. 2: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Nehemiah Christian Center, 514 N. Mangum St.

## **Riding one of those new electric scooters in Raleigh? You better read the fine print.**

The News and Observer By Anna Johnson July 13, 2018

Raleigh — If you've been to downtown Raleigh this week, chances are you've seen them. Maybe you've even taken one for a spin.

Electric scooters have made their way to downtown and other parts of Raleigh. Here's what you need to know about the scooters and why you should read the fine print before hopping on.

### **What are they?**

Bird — a California-based company that's less than a year old — arrived in Raleigh this week with more than 150 electric scooters. The scooters can reach a speed of 15 miles per hour and are dockless, meaning they can be picked up and left in any public spaces. It's a concept similar to the bright green Lime bikes (CONTINUED...)

you see on N.C. State University's campus. People use an app to find the scooters, then pay and unlock them for short rides through downtown Raleigh, Oberlin and Cameron Village.

The only other North Carolina city to have the scooters is Charlotte, according to the [company's website](#).

### **How do they work?**

First things first, download the Bird app (called "Bird — Enjoy The Ride") from the app store. Then use the map function to find a nearby scooter. The app also shows the battery percentage for each of the scooters in the map area. You can also report a bird lost or make it "chirp" to set off a little beep to help find it.

Once you find a scooter you want to ride, you click "ride" and scan the barcode at the top of the scooter. If it's your first time riding, you'll have to take a photo of your license, front and back, and put in your credit or debit card information. A promo code that gives \$5 off your first ride is "BirdRaleigh," and it worked as of this Friday, July 13. It costs \$1 to start the ride, then 15 cents per minute.

You'll also have to sign a waiver that says you're at least 18 years old, wearing a helmet, not riding downhill, obeying all traffic laws and riding at your own risk. The entire terms of service is worth the read at least the first time to get all of the rules and regulations.

To get the scooter going, you've got to kick-start it three times and then push the throttle button down. The brake is on the left-hand side. You ride to your destination on the street or in bike lanes. You are not supposed to ride on the sidewalks. You park the scooter by putting down the kickstand. They're encouraged to be parked close to the curb and near a bike or scooter rack. The app will ask you to take a photo of your parking job to encourage good behavior.

Bird says it will expand beyond the downtown, Cameron Village and Oberlin areas if they're successful.

The rules say you're not supposed to ride a scooter intoxicated, with more than one person, taking a phone call, texting or with a backpack or suitcase if that will distract you. There's also a weight limit of 200 pounds.

### **So they get left everywhere?**

Sorta. The rules that riders agree to in the beginning state that the vehicle can't be parked on private property, in a locked area or in another non-public space. You're asked to keep the scooters out of walkways, driveways, access ramps and fire hydrants.

But does that stop one from ending up on the sidewalk in front of your house or near your front yard? Not really. Ultimately, it's up to the riders to decide where to put them.

If you're riding the scooter, don't forget to lock the vehicle at the end of your trip. If you don't lock it you will still be charged, and the max charge for a single trip is \$100 per 24 hours. And if a scooter is reported missing or stolen, the last person to ride it could be charged unless you can prove it was parked.

The rules also state the vehicle can only be operated in metropolitan areas such as downtown. A few have been spotted on N.C. State's campus. University spokesman Mick Kulikowski said any scooters left on campus will be picked up and held for Bird to pick up to "keep the campus clean and make sure they're not an impediment."

After 7 p.m., people designated as chargers come and pick them up. So if you rode them out to a late dinner, they might not be there when you finish up.

### **What happens to them at night?**

Enter the chargers.

The scooters are electric, which means they have to be charged just like a cellphone or computer. Just like popular ride-sharing companies such as Uber and Lyft, the people who charge the scooters are regular people who get paid for picking up the scooters. (CONTINUED...)

Brian Moriarty, who just moved to the area from New York, signed up to be a local charger for the company. After attending a brief in-person orientation, he received three charging stations. He and other chargers can start picking up the scooters after 7 p.m., and they have to be put back out in populated areas before 7 a.m., at 100 percent battery charge.

If all goes well, he'll be able to add more chargers to his collection and earn more money. Though people get just a few dollars per scooter charged, they can get up to 20 chargers worth \$6 per scooter. That's \$120 per night or \$840 per week. [On the West Coast, the "Bird hunters" have become a full-time job, for some.](#)

### **What happens if I get hurt on one?**

Riders are responsible for any injuries or medical costs that occur while riding the scooters, according to the waiver riders agree to at the beginning. The rider is also responsible for seeing if weather conditions are bad enough to prevent riding. And while the terms of service don't specifically mention what happens if the scooter is hit by another vehicle or a scooter hits a vehicle, Bird says all damages to the scooter, person and other property is the responsibility of the rider and not the company.

Though the rules say you're required to wear a helmet, we haven't seen many people following this rule. North Carolina law states only that people under the age of 16 are required to wear a helmet. The company does offer riders a "free" helmet, but you have to cover the cost of shipping. And you have to have taken your first ride to qualify. Details are under the "safety" tab on the Bird app.

### **Why are they debated?**

Bird and other electric scooter companies have a habit of appearing in cities without warning and for not always following the permitting or approval process. Earlier this summer, San Francisco banned Bird and two other electric scooter companies because they were operating without the proper permitting.

The city of Santa Monica, Calif., sued the company for operating without the proper licensing. Bird agreed to pay \$300,000 in fines and other fees.

There's also a concern about whether the scooters are dangerous or prone to accidents. During the first week after they were launched in Nashville, Tenn., two women were critically injured while riding the scooters.

A woman in Dallas rode the scooters for the first time this week before crashing on trolley tracks. Her \$1.35 trip resulted in [two black eyes, stitches](#) and possibly thousands of dollars in medical bills.

### **Is Raleigh going to regulate them?**

The short answer? It's up in the air for now.

Raleigh's Transportation Planning Manager Eric Lamb said the city is still investigating whether all rules and procedures have been followed by Bird. There was no coordination with the city on the launch and no permitting or approvals through the city, he said.

But this isn't the first time dockless scooters and bicycles have come across the city's radar. Raleigh's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission — a group made up of residents who make recommendations to the City Council — have discussed dockless bicycles and scooters as recently as June. The group's next meeting is at 6 p.m. Monday at the Raleigh Municipal Building downtown. It's no surprise that dockless bikes will be on the list of items to discuss.

Other cities, including Durham, require business owners to [obtain a permit](#) before operating a dockless bicycle program within city limits. Bird and other electric scooters have already been in touch with the Bull City to add electric scooters to the three bike-share programs already in operation. (CONTINUED...)

The citizen advisory group in Raleigh didn't want to pursue that method because it would be cumbersome for staff and businesses, said BPAC chairman Paul Nevill. Instead they want to look at the rules around encroachment, but that hasn't been given the go ahead from Raleigh City Council.

When Raleigh leaders discussed the city-sponsored, dock-based bicycle program, which launches later this year, several council members expressed concern with having a dockless system in or around downtown.

## **I-40 revamping projects underway near RDU**

WRAL.com Traffic By Brian Shrader July 11, 2018

The good news is that officials with the North Carolina Department of Transportation have some ideas to relieve many of those backups.

Crews have been clearing trees at I-40 and Aviation Parkway as part of a new loop exit at the interchange. Right now, all the westbound traffic on I-40 takes the same exit, stopping at the top of the ramp and turning onto Aviation Parkway, but the new exit will carry westbound drivers onto the southbound side of Aviation.

NCDOT engineer Cameron Richards says the work should help drivers get through the interchange a little faster.

Once the clearing finishes, crews will have to relocate utilities before the grading can start. Officials said they are not exactly sure when that will happen, but all lanes of Aviation will remain open during the project.

The project will be complete in about two years.

The other big airport exit -- Airport Boulevard -- is also getting a makeover. Engineers are currently deciding exactly what to do there but say it's likely that interchange will get one of the new diverging-diamond designs.

Once the DOT decides what to build there, expect construction to start next year.

## **Raleigh and three other NC cities are listed among the 'best cities' for drivers**

The Herald-Sun By Mark Price July 10, 2018

Four North Carolina cities won Top 10 spots on a list of the 100 "Best and Worst Cities to Drive in."

Raleigh topped the list for best cities, [which was compiled by WalletHub](#) using such things as Bureau of Transportation statistics.

The other three North Carolina communities are Greensboro at No. 4, Winston-Salem at No. 6 and Durham at No. 7.

A quick look at similar surveys in the past year shows Greensboro is a common denominator.

One recent survey by WAZE, the "world's largest community-based traffic and navigation app," put Greensboro [in the No. 1 spot last November and Raleigh didn't make the Top 5](#). Another survey, by [DriveShare](#), put Greensboro at No. 3 and Corpus Christi, Texas, at No. 1. Raleigh didn't make the Top 5 on that one, either.

Charlotte did not make the Top 10 of the WalletHub survey or any other survey. It came in at No. 19.

Detroit was named the worst city for driving, followed by San Francisco, Oakland, Philadelphia and Seattle.

WalletHub says it used 29 "key indicators of driver friendliness" to make the list, including gas prices, car thefts, average time spent stuck in traffic, and roadway infrastructure.

"Drivers annually spend an average of more than 290 hours on the road. For a full-time worker, that's the equivalent of a seven-week vacation," [said the survey overview](#).

"Add the costs of wasted time and fuel due to traffic congestions, and our collective tab comes to about \$124 billion annually, or \$1,700 per household."

To see if your city made the list of "100 Best and Worst Cities" for driving, check out [wallethub.com/edu/best-worst-cities-to-drive-in](http://wallethub.com/edu/best-worst-cities-to-drive-in).

## **Bike lanes are coming to this Durham street. Why some cyclists aren't happy about it**

The Herald-Sun By Joe Johnson June 28, 2018

**DURHAM** – Bicycles and cars will have their own lanes on Broad Street later this summer when the street is resurfaced.

But local cyclists will not be getting all they want.

City transportation officials considered three options for the bike lanes before settling on the type most people already know: a lane for cyclists next to vehicular traffic.

The other two options — buffered or protected lanes that separate bikes from cars — were not good fits for Broad Street, they said.

City Manager Tom Bonfield said heavy traffic and the many driveways and intersections along the street played into the final decision.

"The more appropriate and safe option is to have cars [parked] along the curb and bicyclists in a visible position between the parking lane and motor vehicle lane," he said.

Bike Durham and other cycling advocates wanted the protected or buffered bike lanes, in which cyclists ride in a lane between the curb and a lane of parked cars. They provided examples of these bike lanes from other cities, including Burlington, Vermont, and San Francisco.

"We know that people on bikes are safer between parked cars and sidewalks than between parked cars and moving vehicles," Bike Durham said in a response to the city.

But Durham transportation officials pointed out problems with putting such lanes on Broad Street.

Bicyclists would be less visible to drivers at driveways and intersections. They would also face difficulty making left turns off Broad Street, according to the city analysis.

The street also is not wide enough under state standards to provide the recommended 3-foot buffer between the parking lane and the bike lane. (CONTINUED...)

Bike Durham offered rebuttals to these points that Durham City Councilman Charlie Reece found compelling. In an email exchange with Bonfield, he suggested protected bike lanes should be considered.

"I believe the benefits are worth the costs," Reece said. "There will be a learning curve, but this is an opportunity to make this important cycling corridor safer for our cyclists. If we need increased public education about how cyclists, pedestrians and drivers can more safely navigate this type of configuration, we should talk about how best to do that."

Bonfield said there may be other places in town where buffered bike lanes can be created.

"We believe that on the appropriate corridor and with good design, parking away from the curb is a viable option," he said. "This is why it was proposed as an option for comment and further analysis."

The city also considered not putting in the bike lanes and encouraging cyclists to use Iredell Street. But it was decided that Broad Street provides greater direct access to shops and businesses along the route than having cyclists traverse between the streets.

More than 300 people sent comments to the city regarding the bike lanes. Many called for installing the protected bike lanes. Some said standard bike lanes would be an improvement. A few decried the high number bicycles now found on sidewalks since the arrival of bike-sharing services Limebike and Spin.

Broad Street, which currently is not marked with bike lanes, will lose about half its street parking to accommodate the bike lanes.

Parking will be allowed on one side of the street for about half the stretch, and then it will be shifted to the other side for the remaining portion, according to the plan. Between Perry and Knox streets, the available parking will be on the west side of the street. Parking will be on the east side between Knox Street and Guess Road. Where there is no parking, the bike lane will be next to the curb. In areas with parking, the bike lane will run next to traffic.

## **Group wants better looking Durham-Orange light-rail stations with more shade**

The Herald-Sun By Tammy Grubb July 24, 2018

DURHAM – A local urban design group wants tobacco barns, factories and warehouses to inspire the look of the planned Durham-Orange light rail stations.

"It appears architecture and art have taken a back seat to engineering aspects of the project," Dan Jewell, president of the Durham Area Designers, told the GoTriangle Board of Trustees and officials in Durham and Orange counties in a July 19 letter.

The letter was written in response to preliminary concept plans presented at an April workshop. GoTriangle hasn't released any updated or final station designs.

The 17.7-mile Durham-Orange light-rail line could have 19 stations linking UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill to Duke and N.C. Central universities in Durham. The project is more than halfway through the final, engineering stage and could be submitted later this year to the Federal Transit Administration for possible federal funding. (CONTINUED...)



The Durham Area Designers group proposed this light-rail station design as an example of how GoTriangle could better represent the history and culture of Durham and Orange counties and also protect light-rail riders from the elements.

**Elizabeth Wilcox** Durham Area Designers

The Durham Area Designers, a group that advocates for “good urban design,” thinks the draft designs could better reflect Durham and Orange counties, while offering better protection from the weather, Jewell said.

“To be clear, the experience of riders begins and ends at the station, and if that experience is not comfortable and enjoyable, ridership will suffer over time,” he said. “Multiple transit studies have suggested that the architectural quality of stations should be as high a priority as more conventional planning metrics, including cost and travel time.”

Jewell also asked for more opportunities for the public to offer written feedback.



A conceptual design presented at an April 2018 workshop featured multiple, short gull wing-type canopies over the platform of a Durham-Orange light-rail train station. The Durham Area Designers group called the designs “basic” and offered several suggestions in July.

**GoTriangle** Contributed

GoTriangle officials responded with an emailed statement. (CONTINUED...)

"The light-rail project currently has funding for basic station design elements, but no designs have been finalized at this point," spokeswoman Burgetta Wheeler said. "GoTriangle welcomes input and sponsorships to help fund and shape the final light-rail station designs."

Orange County Commissioner Barry Jacobs also responded to the group's letter, thanking them in an email for their comments. The project's cost — now \$3.3 billion, including the anticipated interest on loans — is a "major consideration" for Orange County, he said.

"The Orange County commissioners also have repeatedly expressed concerns about the planning process and, as is often the case with GoTriangle, have been met with a genial smile and a deaf ear," Jacobs said.

The commissioners have asked GoTriangle officials multiple times to be included with Durham and Chapel Hill in the station-planning process. A meeting involving Orange County, Chapel Hill, and Durham city and county officials was held in June but focused on land design and the economic potential of light-rail station area development.

GoTriangle held four planning workshops this year to get ideas for how the system should look and feel to riders and passersby.

Durham Area Designers members attended those workshops, Jewell said, and think the "gull wing" canopy designs presented at the April workshops would be "ineffective in providing actual shade and protection from the elements."

The concepts feature small geometric and plant motifs etched into glass and concrete — in muted pinks, blues, gray and black. Those ideas do not reflect local history, culture, materials or public input, Jewell said.

His group offered several recommendations:

- Reflect the local architecture, design and materials found in tobacco barns, factories and warehouses
- Extend the canopies from the platform to the train and cover at least 75 percent of the platform
- Use brick and metal with patina, a gloss that forms over time and exposure, instead of applied patterns
- Avoid stainless steel, aluminum and forced, repetitive patterns
- Make sure there is room for art — now or in the future

## **Durham-Orange light-rail 'in rare company,' planner says. But \$57M gap remains.**

The Herald-Sun By Tammy Grubb June 22, 2018

DURHAM — Elected officials learned more Thursday about the financial challenges facing the Durham-Orange light-rail project, but also about the benefits it could deliver.

Scott Polikov, a consultant and founder of Gateway Planning, sought to reassure Durham and Orange county commissioners about the federal funding prospects. The planning for walkable light-rail station development and maximum community benefits already is paid with a \$2.1 million Federal Transit Administration grant, he said.

"Doesn't it say something that this FTA grant [for station development] was awarded under a prior administration, and you all moved into final engineering under this administration?" Polikov said. "You're in rare company. You've been basically endorsed by both recent presidential administrations and the FTA. That's a big deal."

Thursday's meeting came as GoTriangle and the Durham and Orange county commissioners await Gov. Roy Cooper's signature on a state "technical corrections" bill, which will change the language of a state budget bill passed earlier this month. (CONTINUED...)

The budget bill required the project to have federal funding before it could get state funds, although federal rules require the project first to have state funding. The Catch-22 risked ending the light rail project, which is now in the final engineering phase.

The 17.7-mile line would cost \$2.47 billion to build and connect UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill with Duke and N.C. Central universities in Durham. Another \$890 million in local money would pay the interest on debt.

While the technical corrections bill lets the project continue, it also limits state funding to \$190 million, instead of the anticipated \$247 million. It also requires local partners to show they have roughly \$1 billion in local and private money by April 2019 and \$1.24 billion in federal money by November 2019.

### **Funding gap**

The FTA grant application could be submitted by the end of the year, GoTriangle General Manager Jeff Mann said, with a decision by September 2019.

Until then, it's important to keep going, Mann said, and for the boards to figure out how to fill the roughly \$57 million gap in state funding. The commissioners are expected to meet in July and need a financial plan by August, he said.

"We are looking at a range of options to fill that gap through cost-cutting or value engineering, or raising additional funds," Mann said. "We want to work very closely with Orange County and Durham County to evaluate what those options are and bring you potential solutions to plug that funding gap."

At this time, Mann said, GoTriangle is spending roughly \$4.8 million a month on project engineering. That puts the project on track to spend roughly \$97 million by the end of June, including the \$33 million spent on its first, environmental phase.

If the light-rail project falls apart, Mann said, the partners would draft new transit plans. They could get out of consultant contracts, which total \$114.8 million, but would have to pay for any work already completed.

### **Station planning**

The commissioners spent the bulk of their meeting learning more about the light-rail station planning and economics, particularly at the future Gateway and Patterson Place stations, which hug both sides of Interstate 40 and the Chapel Hill-Durham border.

Data shows that drivers spend an extra minute each year traveling the U.S. 15-501 corridor between Chapel Hill and Durham, said Patrick McDonough, GoTriangle's manager of planning and transit-oriented development. That also affects bus routes, making the commute longer and more expensive for taxpayers, he said.

Light rail would be part of a wide-ranging transit network that gives people multiple ways to cross the Triangle, he said. It will be especially important as jobs along the light-rail corridor grow from roughly 106,000 today to 150,000 in 20 years, he added.

Polikov noted that a successful transit-oriented station development would spur a dense, compact, pedestrian friendly mix of residential and commercial uses, with limited but managed parking lot and decks. Rail just gives more people access, he said.

It also is possible for stations to have new and existing affordable housing, added Brandon Palanker, with Gateway Planning, but it will take cooperation, clear development processes, and public and private partnerships.

(CONTINUED...)

Polikov directed the commissioners' attention to a draft plan for Gateway Station, pointing out the 10- to 15-story buildings at the core, four- and five-story residential and mixed-use buildings farther back from the highway, and townhomes closer to Old Durham Road.

"It's not just putting uses together," he said. "It's also relating them in a way that when you walk out the front door of any of the buildings, you feel like you want to walk around, you feel like you want to hang out, you feel like you're part of the neighborhood as a whole."

That's also what drives the economics of the light-rail stations, he said.

Estimates show the Gateway and Patterson Place stations could generate over \$3 billion in investments and \$44.6 million a year in property tax revenues for Orange and Durham counties, Polikov said. That would support a broader tax base, new jobs and more opportunities for residents, he said.

Those stations also will bring benefits to the existing neighborhoods, whether it's entertainment or jobs, Durham County Commissioners Chairwoman Wendy Jacobs added. It's good for Durham and Orange counties to talk about the Gateway Station, because it's "the single-most important site in terms of the new economic development impact," she said.

"Our region's projected to have a million more people," Jacobs added. "We have to make decisions about where are we going to put these people to protect the quality of life we want, how are we going to connect people to jobs. I'm excited for us to do that work together."

## **Could this proposed state bill keep the Durham-Orange light-rail plan on track?**

The Herald-Sun By Tammy Grubb and Lauren Horsch June 13, 2018

RALEIGH – A bill passed Wednesday by the state Senate could remove the roadblock recently put in front of the Durham-Orange light-rail project.

However, the bill's new, \$190 million cap on state funding appears to still limit the possibility of the light-rail project moving forward.

Durham Sen. Floyd McKissick Jr. spoke Wednesday about working with Republican Senate Leader Phil Berger for over a week to reach consensus, including through a conference call that also included state and federal transportation officials, and GoTriangle General Manager Jeff Mann. It was important to provide solid data about mass transit projects, he said.

"You're dealing with several issues," he said. "First, you have people who are skeptical of mass transit, don't believe the light rail system is needed, and are afraid that it would soak up more money than is currently allocated for it. They would rather see some of those funds spent on other transportation infrastructure projects — road projects."

Durham Sen. Mike Woodard also noted the work that GoTriangle officials, as well as local and business leaders, put in to lobbying lawmakers and sharing information.

"I appreciate the Senate leadership hearing our arguments in favor of light rail, listening to the business case for this, and understanding the unique opportunity to provide this funding for critical transportation needs in the growing Triangle region," he said.

Woodard said a House vote has not been scheduled yet, but he also expects that chamber to approve the bill.

(CONTINUED...)

The state's budget [that won final approval Tuesday](#) would have required Durham and Orange counties to get all local, private and federal funding before asking the state for light-rail money. It created a Catch-22, because the Federal Transit Administration already requires agencies to get a commitment for all the other money before applying for federal funds.

But part of the 28-page [technical corrections bill](#) would repeal that clause. The change would let local governments seek state funding for light-rail projects, but they couldn't spend the money until they showed in writing that all other money for a project was secured.

If the state doesn't get written notice by April 30, 2019, the N.C. Department of Transportation would stop funding for the project.

The bill also limits funding for regional commuter rail and light rail projects to 10 percent of the regional transportation allocation or estimated project costs, whichever is less. It specifically caps state funding for the Durham-Orange light-rail project at \$190 million.

That means the regional partners would have to fill a \$57 million shortfall in the state's expected contribution of \$247 million.

Light-rail construction is expected to cost \$2.47 billion, plus roughly \$830 million in interest on debt payments. The 17.7-mile Durham-Orange light-rail project would connect UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill with Duke and N.C. Central universities in Durham.