

DURHAM • CHAPEL HILL • CARRBORO METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

101 City Hall Plaza • Durham, NC 27701 • Phone (919) 560-4366 • dchcmpo.org



To: DCHC MPO Technical Committee
From: Jacob Ford, Transportation Modeler
Date: January 26th, 2022
Re: US 70 East Corridor Study

Summary. The US 70 East Corridor Study will analyze corridor's conversion into a boulevard, with focus on how such a transformation would impact multi-modal transportation, address existing safety concerns, and influence access and connectivity for residents and businesses.

Background. The US 70 East Corridor in Durham County is poised to continue experiencing growth in both population and employment. The corridor has been recognized for its critical role as a major arterial by both the DCHC MPO and NCDOT, in particular for the connection the corridor will play after the completion of the East End Connector and providing additional connection to the Raleigh-Durham International Airport. Demographically, regions of the corridor are majority minority, hence represent an environmental justice concern. Transportation networks should be designed in a manner to better, not diminish, access and connectivity.

Through STIP U-5720, the corridor in Durham County was set to be upgraded to a controlled access freeway, from Lynn Road to TW Alexander Drive in Durham County. U-5518 continues the expansion of US 70 to a freeway in Wake County. In Durham County, concerns were initially raised and addressed to NCDOT from City, County and MPO staff regarding existing safety limitations for multimodal movement. Conceptual plans by NCDOT show only one interchange along this corridor at Miami/Mineral Springs, and two grade separations at Page/Leesville Roads and Pleasant Drive.

Limited access points, through interchanges or grade separations, along the corridor represent a significant challenge to residents and would operate as a barrier to ease of movement, especially for local residents who would be most impacted. The freeway conversion would require The freeway conversion presented limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities and limited options for movement across a limited access freeway. Passengers using existing transit routes using US 70 in Durham County would have severely limited access points. Additionally, in the freeway conversion, a significant number of existing residential and commercial businesses would require relocation.

Through this study, an analysis of an alternative approach to the freeway conversion will be developed. The study will analyze how a potential boulevard conversion of US 70 in Durham County might function given existing and projected demand. A number of alternative configurations of how to best accommodate vehicular traffic, while addressing the aforementioned concerns, will be evaluated and a preferred option will be presented for ultimate consideration. DCHC MPO, County and City staff have met with NCDOT several times throughout the development of the scope of the study, and an emphasis of NCDOT operating as an active partner has been established. This study will be completed in the Spring of 2023, allowing any final recommendations from the study to be folded into the design phase of U-5720.