



August 7, 2023

DCHC MPO Board Members
4307 Emperor Boulevard, Suite 110
Durham, NC 27703

Re: Comments on 2050 MTP Amendment #1 and FY2024-2033 TIP

Dear DCHC Board Members,

These requests for changes to the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan initiated by the North Carolina Department of Transportation are the first real tests of whether you are willing to make decisions about project funding that is consistent with the bold vision you set with the adoption of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. We trust that the DCHC Board remains committed to the goals of zero carbon emissions, zero deaths or serious injuries, and zero racial disparity of access by 2050. We believe that you understand that we can only expect to achieve those goals through changes to the way that we define our transportation problems and the way that we consider solutions. These decisions you will make on items 9 and 11 on the August 9th agenda are an opportunity for you to communicate to the Technical Committee staff and to NCDOT that you expect new approaches to congestion concerns. We offer examples of alternative approaches below:

I-5707: I-40 Auxiliary Lanes westbound between Durham Freeway and NC55 and
U-5934 I-885 from Durham Freeway to I-40

Our concern with these two projects is that additional lanes (even an auxiliary lane) increases vehicle capacity to these segments of roadway. While adding vehicle capacity may have short-term benefits in reducing driver delay, it induces additional demand that adds vehicle miles traveled and the corresponding carbon emissions. We are further troubled that there is no description of the problem, nor what other measures were evaluated to address the problem, nor how the proposed lanes are expected to perform. This leads us to believe that there was no consideration of alternatives.

We urge the DCHC MPO Board to negotiate with NCDOT real alternatives - Intelligent Transportation System alternatives (e.g., ramp metering or dynamic speed signs), operational changes (e.g., changed lane markings or signs to reduce confusion and lane shifting - see example on following page), and additions of Transportation Demand Management strategies

(e.g., additional transit service or traveler mode shift incentives) - are evaluated prior to proposals to add vehicle lane capacity.

NC 55 Southbound Lane

Our concern with this project is not only will the auxiliary lane add vehicle capacity, but it will also widen the street making it even less hospitable to people crossing from the bus stop or the hotel to the business across the street. Rather than assuming that all travel will occur in automobiles in suburban areas like this one, you can use these identified congestion problems as opportunities to begin to retro-fit the areas to be safer for walking, biking, and transit use. In many cases, like this one, we think that a modern roundabout could be a better solution than adding an auxiliary lane.

We urge the DCHC MPO Board to negotiate with NCDOT so that modern roundabouts are evaluated first as solutions to intersection congestion. Modern roundabouts are safer for drivers, they slow traffic speeds, and they reduce delay and improve traffic flow. They can often be designed to be safe for people walking and biking, and they avoid the addition of turn lanes or auxiliary lanes since the traffic continues to flow through the intersection. They also have lower long-term operating costs. Virginia has had a "roundabout first" policy since 2009.

U-5937 Durham Freeway through downtown Durham

During the Technical Committee meeting on July 26th, it appeared that there was an understanding that NCDOT would await the outputs of the City of Durham's current study of the future of the Freeway through downtown and that defining the project as "operational improvements" could accommodate a wide range of solutions. We

We urge the Board to remove the mention of "auxiliary lanes" in the project description because they may not be a part of the proposed solution. We further urge the Board to go on record that support for including this project in the TIP is made with the expectation that NCDOT will await the outputs of the City of Durham's study before proceeding with preliminary design and that the project design will be consistent with the City's study.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Tallmadge", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Tallmadge
Bike Durham, Executive Director

Concept for changing lane striping on NC 885/I-885 northbound

On this segment, in each direction, it seems that the current lane striping contributes to inefficient merging that creates bottlenecks. Two northbound lanes on NC 885 merge with two lanes exiting I-40 northbound to become I-885. The volumes on NC 885 are usually light and lower than the volumes coming off of I-40. However, the leftmost lane from NC 885 does not merge into the two through lanes until T.W. Alexander, while the rightmost lane exiting I-40 becomes an exit only lane at Cornwallis Rd. If the two lanes from NC 885 were merged into a single lane before reaching the merge with the I-40 exit lanes, and then the lanes were re-striped from there to T.W. Alexander, less weaving would be required by drivers, avoiding a major cause of the slowdowns.

We propose that a change like this should be considered, and if promising, then implemented prior to any decision to add travel lanes.