

## This is how Durham wants to make its city streets safer for bicyclists

The Herald-Sun By Zachery Eanes December 4, 2017

DURHAM – Last week hundreds of bikes were added to the streets of Durham, with the arrival of the bike-share startups Spin and LimeBike.

Many of the people likely to use these new bikes are novice riders or those who haven't ridden a bike in a long time. For new riders, navigating the busy streets of Durham can be an intimidating and potentially dangerous experience.

One solution the city hopes will make the prospect less daunting is the implementation of "bike boulevards," a concept that has gained popularity on the West Coast.

Bike boulevards, which have been created in cities like [Portland, Ore.](#) and [Berkeley Calif.](#), would turn some neighborhood streets across the urban core of Durham into preferred routes for the bicyclists – directing bikers off car-heavy streets and toward quieter routes. Durham is hoping to create at least seven miles of these bike boulevards in the coming years to help safely move bicyclists more easily from north Durham to south Durham.

"What we are hoping is that these bike boulevards would help residents on a bike get to key destinations more safely and really direct them to (roads) with lower traffic volumes and more bikeable streets that they might not have known about if they were driving a car," said Bryan Poole, a bicycle and pedestrian coordinator for Durham. "It's the one-street-over concept."

That "one-street-over" concept is currently exemplified by Watts Street in the Trinity Park neighborhood, which became the city's first bicycle boulevard in 2016. On that street, the city has put pavement markings and street signs directing cyclists to use that road and letting motor vehicles know the street is a preferred bicycle route.

Watts Street has become a popular route between downtown and north Durham, as it offers a similar route to the heavily trafficked Gregson and Duke streets. The city also created two-way bicycle lanes on Watts, while automobiles are only allowed to travel one direction, and there are several speed bumps on the street.

But, the city needs more Watts Streets outside of Trinity Park, said Brian Vaughn, the interim director for Durham Bike Boulevards, which has been the lead advocate for the creation of bike boulevards.

"Durham has a really healthy commuting culture," Vaughn said. "I think where we want to be is what Washington, D.C. is – where you can really ride a bike and be fearless. We want mothers of small children to feel comfortable biking with their kids, and for elderly folks to have mobility to get downtown."

### What are bike boulevards?

Bike boulevards – also known as neighborhood greenways – are existing neighborhood streets that discourage cut-through car traffic through the use of signs, pavement markings and speed and volume management. Streets with low motor-vehicle volumes are preferred to ones with high speed limits and lot of of daily traffic.

Designated bike boulevards are often located parallel to popular thoroughfares, as Watts Street is parallel to both Gregson and Broad streets in the Trinity Park neighborhood. Motor vehicles are still allowed to go on bike boulevards, but speed limits are set low and street signs discourage non-local vehicles, while highlighting that it's a preferred bike route.

Bike boulevards often operate as a network of routes to popular points of destination, so that cyclists rarely, if ever, have to go on busy streets. When a bike boulevard does intersect with a popular street, there are often designated bike lanes and crossings.

Bike boulevards are also designed to guide cyclists to popular destinations, letting users know where the boulevards go and what's located nearby, such as parks and business and entertainment districts.

### **What would it look like in Durham?**

It's too early to say which streets will be included in the bike boulevard project, but transportation planner Bryan Poole with the city of Durham said it will probably be similar to a proposed map that the advocacy group Durham Bike Boulevards made.

Durham Bike Boulevards created a map of a potential [15-mile](#) of network that highlights streets on both sides of the Durham Freeway (N.C. 147) that could potentially get cyclists from as far south as N.C. Central University to as far north as the Ellerbee Creek Trail. The Durham Bike Boulevard proposal uses the American Tobacco Trail and the East Coast Greenway as a central artery for the network of streets.

"Our goal is that if you get on one of the bike-share bikes and you are staying at a hotel in downtown or if you are a student at NCCU, you can jump on a bike it could be really easy (to bike around town)," Poole said. "If you are at Lakewood shopping center and want to get downtown or from Duke to Wellons Village, they could all be connected. You wouldn't need to pull out a map or a phone, it can be more intuitive (through signage)."

Poole added that no new bike lanes would be created through the bike boulevard project, but that bike boulevards would be chosen so that there would be designated bike lanes at main-thoroughfare crossings.

### **When would they be built?**

Poole said that the city will be asking consultants to submit proposals for the bike boulevards project in coming weeks. From there it will take a couple of months before a consultant and plan is chosen.

Design work will likely begin in the spring and construction will start at the earliest in May 2019. That may seem like a long time, but because federal funding is involved the timeline can take time, Poole said.

### **How much will they cost?**

The city estimates that it will cost \$644,728 to sign and mark at least seven miles of neighborhood streets for bike boulevards. The city's transportation department received federal funding of \$505,498 for the project, which requires a local match of \$126,375. The city estimates that another \$12,855 will be needed for administration costs.

Vaughn from Durham Bike Boulevards hopes the city designates as many bike boulevards as possible with the funds.

"What we don't want is five miles of very well-striped and painted bicycle boulevards with three quarters of a mile in Trinity Park and a quarter of mile in East Durham ... and none of its connected," he said. "I think a much wiser use of funds would make the urban core really well connected; then you will see an explosion of bike use in Durham."

## **Can Chapel Hill handle a 5-story building, more traffic south of UNC?**

The Herald-Sun By Tammy Grubb November 29, 2017

CHAPEL HILL – A multistory building plan for South Columbia Street is raising a lot of questions about how a major road where cars already line up every weekday and on UNC game days could handle more traffic.

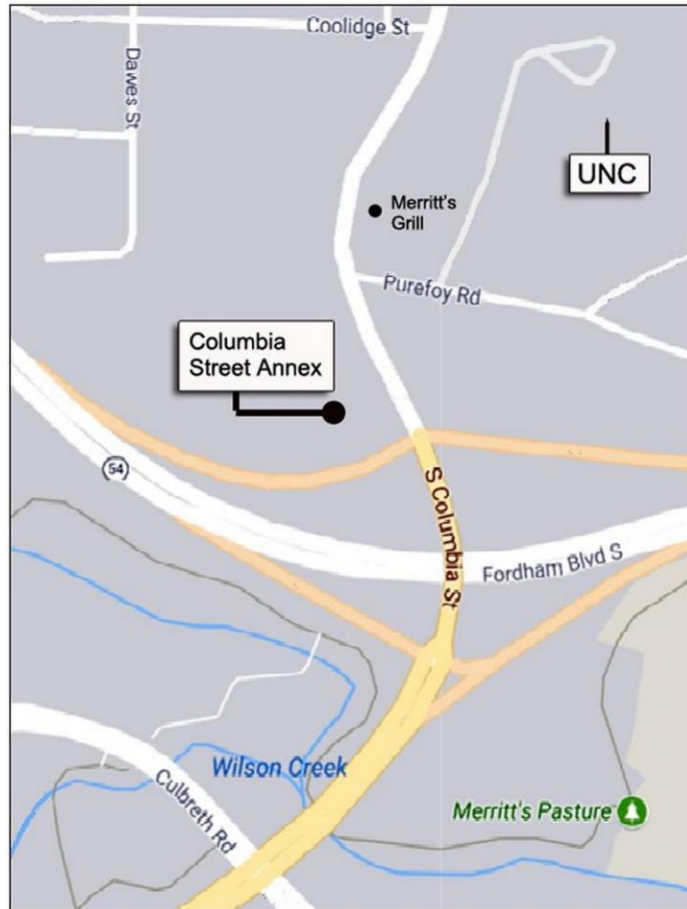
The Columbia Street Annex project could add housing, offices and retail to 4.2 wooded acres at the corner of South Columbia Street and the N.C. 54 West on-ramp. A single driveway allowing access to the site could be located across South Columbia Street from Purefoy Road and Merritt's Store and Grill.

The N.C. Department of Transportation already plans to change the N.C. 54 on-ramp to accommodate traffic generated by the future Obey Creek development near Southern Village. Those changes would affect the Columbia

Street project, but how the future intersection would look and how much land it would take haven't been decided yet, said architect Phil Szostak, representing Raleigh-based White Oak Properties.

The developer thinks there will be a solution and is working with the state to plan the interchange and other road improvements, he said.

"As the neighbors will tell you, this is a bad intersection, and it's a bad part of the road," Szostak said. "If we need to condemn this project because of traffic, we need to condemn every project that the university, every project that the downtown, everything that comes in through this direction. It all contributes."



The Herald-Sun

Town Council members, after reviewing a concept plan for the project recently, still had concerns. Submitting a concept plan gives the developer an opportunity to get feedback before submitting an official application.

The town's lack of control over surrounding state roads frustrates the conversation, council member Donna Bell said.

"I feel like we are patching things together ... trying to sort of make adjustments, and no matter what we do, we don't seem to float to the top of this being an important intersection for our state," she said. "I also don't think that we can just develop property because we're waiting for NCDOT to come up with a solution, and maybe not a solution that we're interested in or excited about."

Neighbors also are worried about increased traffic and particularly about the possibility that the developer will want to add a new connection to small, winding neighborhood streets to the north.

"Statistics don't indicate how many squealing brake stops there are because of pedestrians trying to cross the road or someone's trying to turn left out of Purefoy Road," neighbor Nina East said.

Others fear the building would dwarf existing one- and two-story homes and businesses.

Five stories are proposed along the street, rising to seven as the building descends the slope. The additional height would come from two stories of under-building parking built into the hill.

Inside, the developer plans 39 efficiency, one- and two-bedroom condominiums and townhomes. The developer could sell six condos for less than market rate or pay \$700,000 into the town's affordable housing fund, Szostak said.

The council has multiple options for approaching the project if an application is submitted, senior planner Kay Pearlstein said. Besides the typical special-use permit and rezoning, the council also could negotiate a development agreement, similar to what the town used with the Obey Creek project.

A future option, which the council will continue discussing Wednesday, is a conditional zoning.

All three options would involve advisory board reviews and public hearings before the council decides whether to rezone the site and approve the project.

## **Think DMV lines are long now? Imagine if 4 million people wait to get their REAL ID.**

The News and Observer By Richard Stradling November 28, 2017

RALEIGH – As publicity stunts go, this one was pretty low-key: State Board of Transportation member Allen Moran went to his local DMV office in Nags Head two days before Thanksgiving to get his REAL ID, a form of driver's license that meets stricter federal identification standards that go into effect in October 2020.

The press was notified and invited to come along, as they will be when transportation board members across the state go to their local DMV offices to get REAL ID's in the coming weeks.

The Division of Motor Vehicles has no money to market the REAL ID, so it is looking to low-cost strategies like this to get the word out. DMV commissioner Torre Jessup says he expects as many as 4 million North Carolinians will want a REAL ID before October 2020, and he fears too many of them will wait until the last minute to come in.

"We need people to come in now," Jessup said at a Board of Transportation meeting earlier this month. "If we set out to achieve a goal of getting every driver's license holder a REAL ID by this deadline, we're talking about 220,000 additional people coming through our offices each month. We can't handle that with our current infrastructure, and we definitely can't handle it if everybody waits until the last minute. And it would be a disaster. So we've got to start now."

### **Why we need REAL ID**

The REAL ID looks and works like a driver's license or state-issued ID, except that it has a gold star in the upper right-hand corner. The star indicates that the license satisfies federal ID requirements for boarding airplanes and entering federal buildings, military bases and nuclear facilities.

Congress created the new identification standards through the REAL ID Act of 2005 in response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Some military bases already require that civilian visitors either have a REAL ID or two forms of other identification, such as a veteran's health ID card issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

But where most people will find the ID useful will be in boarding a domestic flight starting on Oct. 1, 2020. Those without a state-issued REAL ID would still be able to get on a plane with a standard driver's license, but they'll also need a second form of identification spelled out in the federal law, such as a passport.

The [DMV began issuing REAL ID's on May 1](#), and as of Monday more than 211,000 people have received them. Unlike a standard driver's license, which can be renewed online, someone must come in to the DMV to obtain a REAL ID.

Jessup says he worries not enough people know about REAL ID yet.

He says DMV will use a "grassroots effort" to draw attention to the ID and urge people to get them sooner rather than later. The agency will make it easier to get one by taking some of its mobile driver's license offices to businesses, university campuses and military bases where large numbers of travelers work. It will also work through travel agents associations, whose members book travel for business and pleasure, to draw attention to the ID.

DMV will also try to drum up free media, which is where the press events with Board of Transportation members come in. The board's members may not be household names – can you name one? – but Jessup says the press came out when he got his REAL ID in Winston-Salem in late September. He told board members this month that he thinks the same can happen with them.

"People recognize you, recognize your faces," he told them. "If we can get some media out of this, we need that free media."

#### **What you need to get a REAL ID**

Some of the board members said they were concerned about having the right documents to get a REAL ID; they didn't want to get turned away under the glare of TV lights. Board chairman Michael Fox assured them that they would be coached ahead of time.

"You will not be made to look foolish," he said. "You will be successful because we want people to see how you can be successful."

The documents that meet the requirements include a birth certificate, a valid U.S. passport or immigration documents, and a Social Security card or W-2 form. Under federal law, the DMV scans the documents used to obtain the REAL ID and permanently stores them.

A REAL ID costs the same as a standard driver's license – \$40 for a Class A license good for eight years. If your license is not up for renewal, getting a REAL ID will cost the \$13 you'd pay for a duplicate license.

More information on North Carolina's REAL ID, including the types of identification required to get one, is available at [NCREALID.gov](http://NCREALID.gov).

## **Need a ride? Two bike-share programs launching in Durham next week**

The Herald-Sun By Zachery Eanes November 21, 2017

DURHAM – Two competing bike-share programs bring their services to Durham next week, flooding the city with hundreds of bicycles for public use.

Both [Spin](#) and [LimeBike](#) will launch 300 bikes each throughout the city starting Monday, Nov. 27 – a number that could quickly rise to 2,500 bikes each under the city's recently approved bike-share [ordinance](#).

The two dockless bike-share programs, which allow users to rent bikes for 30-minute increments via a smartphone, have grown in popularity over the past year in the U.S.

Durham was one of the last big cities in North Carolina without some form of bike share, as LimeBike had already launched on the [campuses](#) of N.C. State and UNC Greensboro, and both Spin and LimeBike began putting bikes in [Charlotte](#) last month. UNC-Chapel Hill [launched](#) its own program last month.

Unlike some programs in larger cities – like [Citi Bike](#) in New York City or [Capital Bikeshare](#) in Washington, D.C. – Spin and LimeBike do not have permanent docking stations where customers must pick up or leave a bicycle.

Rather, a Spin or a LimeBike can be left or picked up anywhere. The bikes use GPS technology, so users can find available bikes through maps on their respective apps. Customers can only unlock a bike through the app.

Both Spin and LimeBike typically cost \$1 for 30 minutes of riding, however prices for first-time users and students are discounted.

Dockless bike-share programs, which were first popularized in China, have [multiplied across](#) the U.S. this year, as investors have poured millions into several burgeoning startups such as LimeBike and Spin.

The dockless concept is much cheaper than installing multiple docking stations, which has encouraged bike-sharing startups in markets across the U.S. LimeBike is now available in 26 markets and Spin is in nine.

Bryan Poole, a bicycle and pedestrian planner for Durham, said the two services will be a great opportunity to test demand and route data at zero cost to the city. The success of the two programs will also determine whether the city creates its own dock-based program, something it has been considering, Poole added.

A dock-based program that [Raleigh](#) is planning will reportedly cost \$1.65 million to deploy 300 bikes at 30 stations.

“We get to test where the demand is and where people are riding at no cost to tax payers,” Poole said. “If changes need to be made, we are ready to respond. ... We know there will be growing pains, but we believe it will be a key mobility option for people getting off the bus that need to go that last mile. And for parking downtown, (residents) could park a little farther away and use a bike to do that last half mile.”

### **Targeting Durham**

Brooks Buffington, San Francisco-based Spin’s head of market operations, said Spin began talking with city officials several months ago and has previously put its bikes on campuses such as Furman University in Greenville, S.C.

“We are really targeting places like Durham and Duke University,” Buffington said. “Even though it’s not the biggest city in the world, it has a great sense of community and density of people.”

Buffington said the company is using a warehouse in south Durham to house its local operations, which so far employ nine local workers. That number could expand, as the company introduces more bikes to the city, he added.

Efforts to reach LimeBike for this story were not immediately successful.

Spin’s local employees will be tasked with removing and repairing broken bikes and relocating bikes that have been moved from low-traffic areas. The city is asking both companies to place 20 percent of their bikes in Northeast Central and East Durham to ensure the bikes are available outside of downtown and Duke, Poole said.

### **Bikes in trees**

The employees will also monitor the bikes’ GPS locations to prevent potential theft or vandalism. In Raleigh, for example, LimeBike’s bikes have been [discarded in trees](#) and even at the bottom of a dam.

Spin said it hasn’t had any major issues with theft in its markets.

"We will work with (the Durham Police Department) if it were to become an issue," Buffington said in a statement. "We're excited to launch this technology in Durham, but it will be a community effort to ensure that bikes are being used and returned responsibly. Our bikes have GPS on them so we always know where they are and who last used them."

Poole admitted that it might take a little bit for residents to get used to the fact these bikes can be left anywhere.

"It's a concern of ours and a concern of Duke's, and really it's one of the main issues when you hear about these being launched," Poole said. "We are working proactively with the companies, letting them know where we would prefer the bikes to be placed, especially in downtown and on Ninth Street where there is not a lot of sidewalk space."

The city will debut the two services in CCB Plaza at 11 a.m. on Monday. For users without a smartphone or a credit card, access cards will be available for purchase at Durham City Hall and the Durham Station Transportation Center.