

## The downtown Durham loop ‘should go away.’ Should N.C. 147, too?

The Herald-Sun By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan August 29, 2018

DURHAM – Should highways go through cities?

Many do, including the Durham Freeway, which cut right through the historic African-American neighborhood of Hayti. nearly 50 years ago.

But should it be torn up?

A transportation engineer who has worked on removing highways from the center of cities raised the idea of removing or mitigating the impact of highways in Durham on Wednesday.

Ian Lockwood of Toole Design Group spoke at Downtown Durham Inc.’s speaker series, presenting what’s been done in other cities and lessons Durham could learn from the “Urban Freeway Removal Movement.”

Ways to mitigate a highway through a city:

- Walls or fences surrounding the highway.
- Underpasses and overpasses.
- Elevating the highway.
- Depressing the highway.
- Tunnels.

Mitigation solves small problems like noise, light pollution and obstacles to walking and bicycling.

The Durham Freeway, or N.C. 147, has several points where overpasses let local roads cross the freeway. It also has a pedestrian bridge over one section, between the Alston Avenue and Briggs Avenue exits. The R. Kelly Bryant Jr. Pedestrian Bridge, named for the late African-American leader, is lit at night with an arc of bright blue LED lighting. It opened in 2010, replacing a former bridge. It connects Lakeland Street, which was severed by construction of N.C. 147.

Building highways through African-American neighborhoods was “an ugly part of transportation history,” Lockwood said.

Durham City Council member Charlie Reece said this wasn’t the first time he’s heard of getting rid of the freeway. He said questions that come up are about where the people living near it go after a “great renewal.”

Council member Javiera Caballero said she’d want those who stuck it out and still live near the freeway to still have a place to live that they can afford.

Neither said they want the freeway removed, but they do want the downtown loop to become two-way again. The city has applied in the past for grants to unravel the loop but hasn’t received them.

“The loop should go away,” Caballero said.

Beyond making the loop two-way, Reece wants to straighten out its curves by City Hall.

Downtown Durham Inc. has [also called for making the loop two-way](#), and the [master plan for the Durham Belt Line also calls to make the loop two-way](#).

Lockwood was a transportation planner in West Palm Beach, Florida, in the 1990s, when it was the subject of a documentary about crack cocaine.

"Anyone with a choice had left the city," he said. He was also there during a time when planning helped change the city in a variety of ways, including reopening one-way streets into two-way streets, widening sidewalks and making room for pedestrians and bicyclists.

"The idea is to build what you want as a place," Lockwood said. Not having left turning lanes, for example, brings congestion, "but the thing is, nobody minds ... if you have a cool and wonderful downtown."

### **What's next**

[Downtown Durham Inc.](#) CEO Nicole J. Thompson said the group has no position on Lockwood's ideas, but created the speaker series to share ideas from outside Durham. The next one, Sept. 25, will be about the role of design and inclusive communities.

## **More electric buses are coming to the Triangle**

The Herald-Sun By Richard Stradling August 29, 2018

RALEIGH – GoTriangle and Chapel Hill Transit have each received federal grants to help buy their first electric buses.

The transit agencies plan to each add two electric buses to their fleets sometime in 2020. The buses are more expensive to buy, particularly when the charging stations and other equipment are included, but are cheaper to operate than diesel buses and produce no tailpipe emissions.

The Federal Transit Administration last week awarded \$943,000 to GoTriangle and \$1.38 million to Chapel Hill Transit. Both agencies plan to use the money to order 40-foot buses that will take 18 to 24 months to build and deliver.

"Buses are made to order," said Brian Litchfield, director of Chapel Hill Transit. "Unlike cars, you can't just go down to the local dealership and say 'Hey, this is what I want.'"

GoTriangle expects to order its buses from Proterra, a California company that builds electric buses in Greenville, S.C., at a cost of as much as \$980,000 per bus, said spokesman Mike Charbonneau. That's more than twice the cost of a traditional diesel bus, Charbonneau said. But Proterra says its electric buses should last 18 years, compared to 12 for a diesel, and GoTriangle expects each electric bus to cost \$250,000 to \$400,000 less to operate over its lifespan.

The federal grant essentially makes up the difference in costs for two electric buses compared to diesel, Charbonneau said. GoTriangle has 67 full-size diesel buses; two will be retired when the electrics arrive.

Chapel Hill Transit also plans to buy two buses, but doesn't know yet which company will build them, Litchfield said. The agency has 93 diesel buses and will likely retire two when it receives the electric ones.

These will not be the first electric buses in the Triangle. Raleigh-Durham International Airport has ordered four Proterra buses, with the help of a \$1.6 million grant from the Federal Aviation Administration, and expects those will be shuttling passengers between terminals and remote parking lots starting next spring.

Last year, GoTriangle and Chapel Hill Transit teamed up with GoRaleigh and GoCary to apply for a \$3.27 million federal grant to buy seven electric buses. The agencies did not win the grant.

## NC left Durham-Orange Light Rail with a \$57M gap. Now Durham says it can fill it.

The Herald-Sun By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan August 27, 2018

DURHAM – Durham County now says it can fill a \$57.6 million state funding gap for the Durham-Orange light rail project.

The Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit project is an 18-stop, 17.7-mile line that will run from UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill to N.C. Central University in Durham, with stops along the way including Duke University and downtown Durham. Most of the line is in Durham.

The Durham County Board of Commissioners approved a letter from Commissioners Chair Wendy Jacobs to the GoTriangle Board of Trustees on Monday night, agreeing to fund the \$57.6 million gap created after the N.C. General Assembly changed the funding makeup this summer.

As recently as June GoTriangle said the project's partners still needed to figure out how to fill the funding gap. Jacobs wrote that she, Commissioner Ellen Reckhow and Orange County Commissioners Mark Dorosin and Mark Marcoplos met several times this summer to work it out.

Now Durham County has determined it has enough money in its dedicated local transit revenues, Jacobs wrote.

"Based on updated modeling with still conservative estimates, Durham County's dedicated transit revenues are robust and sufficient to cover the revenue shortfall," she wrote. "Durham County is committed to using these additional funds for this purpose."

The commissioners unanimously approved their chair's letter at Monday night's meeting.

Commissioner Heidi Carter said she wanted to make it clear that the money will not be coming from some additional tax.

"It's not going to take away from other transit plans, bus services, or other initiative we approved last year for the county," Carter said.

After the meeting, Jacobs said they were fortunate to have the funds because of Durham County's tax base.

"Because of our thriving economy, we're doing well," she said. "Everything that is in our current plan will still be able to move forward, including our commuter rail with Wake County."

Jacobs said the project's debt payments will also come out of the local transit revenues. Durham County does not expect Orange County to add additional funds because "Orange County's revenues are not sufficient at this time."

The Home Builders Association of Durham, Orange and Chatham Counties sent a letter supporting the funding to the Durham City Council on Sunday via Wib Gulley, a former Durham mayor and state senator.

Gulley thanked the council members and commissioners "for your work and support for this vital investment in our community's future."

On Monday night, speakers from Durham Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods (CAN), the Durham Housing Authority, the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce and the People's Alliance political group spoke in support of the light rail project and funding.

Durham Housing Authority Development Director Meredith Daye said more than “75 percent of our [public housing] units are within half a mile of proposed light rail stations.”

The light rail line is projected to open in 2028.

More than connect the universities, the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit project “will lay the foundation for the next century of progress in our region and it will play an essential role in North Carolina’s continued success,” Jacobs wrote. “For these reasons, Durham County maintains its unwavering support.”

The total project cost, according to GoTriangle, is \$2.5 billion, and \$29 million each year to operate the rail line. Another \$890 million in local money would pay the interest on debt.

The [funding breakdown, from GoTriangle](#):

- 50 percent from the Federal Transit Administration through the New Starts Capital Investment Grant program.
- 42 percent from local resources including a voter approved half-cent sales tax, vehicle registration fees, and right-of-way and other private donations.
- 7 percent from the state through the N.C. Department of Transportation Strategic Transportation Investment program. That is capped at \$190 million.
- The operation and maintenance costs would be paid for by local tax revenue and fares.

In a joint statement from Durham County Commissioners and Orange County Commissioners, Dorosin wrote that Orange commissioners “appreciate the collaborative and cooperative support of our colleagues in Durham, and are encouraged that we’ve been able to come up with a positive strategy for keep the Durham-Orange Light Rail project moving forward.”

## **As quickly as they arrived, electric scooters in Chapel Hill are gone. Will they return?**

The News and Observer By Anna Johnson August 27, 2018

CHAPEL HILL – If you blinked, you might have missed them.

The frequently debated scooters that began [popping up around Chapel Hill](#) and the UNC campus Thursday were rounded up over the weekend. Now, they’re gone.

Bird, the California company that owns the scooters, agreed to “voluntarily remove its scooters from UNC-Chapel Hill while the university explores the possibility of a partnership with the company,” according to a statement from the university.

An agreement could be in place by the end of September, but public safety and “financial considerations” would be part of that discussion.

People are able to use an app to locate and “unlock” the scooters. It costs \$1 per ride, then 15 cents for each mile (though some are reporting the price was 20 cents per mile in Chapel Hill).

If people open the app now, no scooters can be found in Chapel Hill and there’s a purple banner that reads “bring Bird back to Chapel Hill.” Once you click on the banner, a new screen pops up that says the company is taking a

short break, “but with your help, we will be back soon.” People are then encouraged to call or email to tell the company how Bird has improved their lives.

The scooters, which can reach speeds of 15 miles per hour, are [meant to be ridden in the streets](#), with a helmet, then parked out of people’s way.

“Bird is working with UNC-Chapel Hill so that university students and staff can have access to our affordable, environmentally friendly transportation option,” according to a statement from the company. “The UNC community has already embraced our last mile solution as a way to more easily get around campus and access local businesses in the area, and we are encouraged by their support of our service.”

Bird didn’t coordinate with the town of Chapel Hill or the campus before bringing about 100 scooters to the area. It’s a strategy the company is known for.

The [scooter company also didn’t coordinate](#) with the cities of Raleigh and Charlotte when it brought scooters to those areas this summer. The Raleigh City Council gave the [company 60 days to comply with rules the city is still trying to create](#).

The scooter arrival in Chapel Hill was part of the company’s six-week “university pop-up tour.” It was unclear whether the scooters would be there for the full six weeks or stay after the tour.

“Whether it’s making it to a class on time, clocking in for work or simply getting to campus from the nearest public transit stop, Bird will help eliminate transportation gaps so students and faculty can focus on what really matters: education,” Travis VanderZanden, CEO and founder of Bird, said in a [press release](#).

## Electric Bird scooters land in Chapel Hill

The News and Observer By Anna Johnson August 23, 2018

Chapel Hill – The hotly debated electric scooters that have popped up across the country have now appeared on the streets of Chapel Hill.

The electric scooters, that top out at 15 mph and are meant to be driven in the street, are a relatively new addition to the transit scene in North Carolina. Chapel Hill is at least the third city where the California-based company called Bird has placed its scooters. They [arrived in Charlotte](#) early this summer and in [Raleigh in July](#).

The scooters can be located and “unlocked” using Bird’s app on smartphones. It costs \$1 to start each ride and 15 cents per [minute to ride the scooters](#). According to Bird’s rules, you have to wear a helmet, ride in the streets, and park the scooter out of the public-right-of-way

A photo on [Reddit](#) appeared Wednesday night showing more than 100 Bird scooters set to be released throughout the town.

Efforts to reach the company and the town of Chapel Hill for more information were unsuccessful early Thursday.

The scooter did not coordinate with the city of Raleigh — and Bird is known for arriving overnight in cities with little warning, prompting some city bans. [Raleigh leaders gave the company 60 days to comply](#) with rules the city was still working to create.

At least two [serious injuries](#) have been reported in Raleigh since they arrived last month.

Davis Winkie, a Ph. D. student at UNC-Chapel Hill, used the scooters when he was researching his thesis in California because they were cheap and convenient.

He wrote on Twitter that “folks, the game has changed.”

“I am concerned about the way the town of Chapel Hill may react,” Winkie said in a follow-up interview. “I know some cities have reacted by saying, ‘No, bad, get out of here’ and confiscating the scooters. So I am worried about the town. I think they are a good transit option for the town. And for a university that prohibits freshmen from having a car on campus.”

Chapel Hill and the campus are walkable, but the scooters will help people who have to get far fast without waiting on a bus, he said.

The scooters are picked up each night sometime after 9 p.m. by contracted workers who recharge the scooters overnight and place them back on the streets before 7 a.m.

## **Raleigh to electric scooters: Follow our rules (once we think of them) or get out.**

The Herald-Sun By Anna Johnson August 22, 2018

RALEIGH – The Bird scooters will live to fly another day.

Tuesday, Raleigh leaders debated the new electric scooters, [which flocked without city approval to parts of the city in July](#). Their unannounced arrival has prompted the city to investigate how they should be regulated, from permitting and safety to where they can be driven and parked.

While at least one council member, Dickie Thompson, called for a scooter ban until rules are in place to regulate them, the city ultimately decided to allow the electric scooters to remain. The California-based company will need to meet with city officials and follow regulations within 60 days or risk being banned.

But the rules haven’t been created yet. Raleigh Transportation Director Michael Moore said he hopes to present scooter regulations to the council within 30 days.

The Bird company has placed 150 electric scooters in downtown Raleigh, the southern part of Glenwood Avenue and Cameron Village. Users unlock the scooter with an app on their smartphones and pay \$1 per ride plus 15 cents per minute.

The scooters can reach a maximum speed of 15 mph and should be used with a helmet. While they’re not [allowed on sidewalks](#), they can be parked on a sidewalk for the next rider but should be placed out of the way of pedestrians.

Bird did not seek approval from the city before launching the scooters, and Moore said city staff learned about them the same day as they arrived.

Their arrival prompted Raleigh to look at how other cities have regulated the scooters, and Moore explained that state and city laws differ in their approach to the scooters.

Under state law, the electric scooters are considered mopeds and require a title, insurance, a license plate. Riders must have an helmet, Moore said. But under the city’s code, they are defined as a motor vehicle and can’t be driven on sidewalks, greenways or in bicycle lanes, something Bird encourages.

Electric scooters arrived in Charlotte this summer as well, and Raleigh is looking at how they develop their program, which includes defining how many scooters are allowed, where they can be parked and treating them similarly to bicycles.

Council members seemed to be in agreement about setting up a permitting process to allow Bird to use the right-of-way for the scooters.

Permit fees should cover some of the cost of enforcing the rules, Council member Kay Crowder said, which now falls on the police department.

Council member Nicole Stewart, an outspoken advocate for the scooters, rode a scooter, wearing a helmet, to the Raleigh Municipal Building Tuesday morning.

"There's so much great stuff about Bird that we're not even considering this today," she said. "I want to make sure we're looking at this holistically,"

Thompson said the city can't be a "toothless tiger" and that Raleigh has to do something that will get Bird's attention.

"They came in here and started operating without asking anyone anything," Thompson said.

"That's how they operate throughout," Stewart interrupted.

"That doesn't make it right," Thompson said. "And if it's your child or someone else's child who gets hit after this meeting today than I think we'll have been a short sighted on this."

## **Stuck on NC 98? These changes could ease traffic, reduce wrecks in Durham and Wake**

The Herald-Sun By Tammy Grubb August 10, 2018

DURHAM – Drivers taking N.C. 98 from Durham to Wake County have spent more time at stoplights, hitting their brakes and detouring around wrecks in the last few years than ever before.

A recently completed N.C. 98 Corridor study, based on 18 months of research and public input, may offer some solutions.

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization — a regional transportation board — voted this week to put the plan out for public view and comments. A public hearing and vote to approve the plan are tentatively scheduled for Sept. 12.

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, which plans transportation for Wake, Franklin, Granville, Harnett and Johnston counties, is expected to vote on the draft plan Sept. 19.

The N.C. 98 study area runs 27 miles from U.S. 70 in Durham County through Wake County to U.S. 401 in Franklin County. More rural sections of the corridor are still two-lane country roads, while the remainder is a busy four-lane highway. Bus service is limited, with stops only on major roads in Durham and Wake Forest, and there are very few safe ways for pedestrians and cyclists to get around.

"One of the things we noticed is that there's a lot going on in this corridor," WSP consultant Rachel Gaylord-Miles said. "It changes vastly from Durham to Franklin County, and right in the middle is Falls Lake, so there's a lot of environmentally sensitive areas that we had to be aware of, parks, trails, greenways."

Gaylord-Miles noted that the eastern end is more agricultural, and the corridor also passes a lot of schools, churches and shopping centers that generate traffic and congestion. Areas near the lake are popular for recreation, she said.

## **What could happen**

A previous plan already had called for expanding the two-lane sections to four lanes by 2040.

In the short term, the new plan calls for more stoplights, turn lanes and signal improvements. Highway widening, new medians and upgrades in the town of Wake Forest would come later to serve growing traffic and make the area safer.

Those changes also could reduce the number of crashes, especially in Durham County, the report found.

Data shows 23 percent of the 1,907 crashes in the N.C. 98 corridor between 2012 and 2016 happened in a 2.5-mile stretch from U.S. 70 to Mineral Springs Road. That includes three of eight fatal crashes, it said.

Rear-end crashes comprised 37 percent of all crashes throughout the corridor, and three fatal crashes involved pedestrians or cyclists.

Traffic data shows congestion has worsened since 2010, especially from the N.C. 50 intersection in Wake County to Franklin County. Drivers regularly face long delays near major intersections, the study states.

At the N.C. 98 intersection with Six Forks and New Light roads, for instance, the delay averages over 55 seconds during the morning commute and 76 seconds in the evening. The longest wait — over 105 seconds — is for eastbound evening traffic on N.C. 98, it shows.

## **More people are coming**

Meanwhile, the population around the corridor is growing.

Since 2000, 290,000 people have moved to the corridor, the report found, and another 50,000 people could join them by 2040. Retail is popping up near N.C. 50, just east of the Durham County line, but more is coming to Wake Forest, as are more apartments and offices, the report said.

"This population growth could equate to 20,000 new housing units, 17,000 new jobs and an additional 1 million square feet in commercial office space, with most of that job growth being in the eastern segment," the report said.

Falls Lake is a buffer, a recreation destination and a watershed that serves a half-million Wake County residents. Gaylord-Miles noted that section of the N.C. 98 corridor could benefit from alternative intersection designs.

A quadrant design, for instance, is proposed at the Patterson Road/Sherron Road intersection with N.C. 98. It would require a new road to be built between Patterson Road and N.C. 98, west of the existing intersection (see graphic above).

Drivers who now turn left from or onto N.C. 98 would take the new road instead and then connect with either Patterson Road or N.C. 98 at new intersections. A similar design could be used at Jones Dairy Road in Wake Forest.

## **Bikes and pedestrians**

The report also recommends more safe crossings for pedestrians and multi-use paths for pedestrians and cyclists traveling the corridor through the Falls Lake area. Two key areas recommended for multi-use paths were from Sherron Road to Kemp Road, which also could be used by Neal Middle School students, and from Old Creedmoor Road to Stony Hill Road.

Money to make the corridor improvements could come from several sources, including local and state funding, grants and developers interested in building future projects.

Three plans already have been submitted to the N.C. Department of Transportation for funding: highway improvements from Old Creedmoor Road to Six Forks Road, an upgraded intersection at Six Forks Road, and a plan



to widen N.C. 98 from Junction Road to Lynn Road and add a new median, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, better transit stops and traffic signals.

DCHC-MPO board members emphasized that better transit and pedestrian and cycling facilities should be a key consideration in future projects.

The corridor could pilot a project that builds more multi-use paths and encourage more people to walk or bike, Durham County Commissioner Ellen Reckhow said. A number of cities are separating bike lanes from traffic to make cycling safer, she said.

Multi-use paths have their own issues, such as conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians, Chapel Hill Town Council member Michael Parker said. He encouraged a closer look at transit options to ease congestion and move people through the corridor more quickly.

### **Proposed solutions**

The draft N.C. 98 Corridor plan calls for a range of upgrades to ease traffic congestion on N.C. 98 from U.S. 70 in Durham to U.S. 401 in Franklin County, and to make the entire corridor safer for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.

The plan can be reviewed at [nc98corridor.com/plan](http://nc98corridor.com/plan) and comments can be made at an upcoming public hearing or online at [nc98corridor.com/get\\_involved/comments](http://nc98corridor.com/get_involved/comments). The public hearing is tentatively scheduled for 9 a.m. Sept. 12 in the Committee Room at Durham City Hall, 101 City Hall Plaza in Durham.

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's vote is scheduled for 4 p.m. Sept. 19 at 421 Fayetteville St., Suite 203, in Raleigh.

The following are possible short-term changes:

- New stoplights at Adams Street, Nichols Farm Drive and Olive Branch Road
- Four-way stop at Moores Pond Road
- Signal improvements at Heritage Lake Road and Traditions Grande Boulevard
- Right turn lanes at all four approaches on Mineral Springs Road
- New auxiliary lanes at N.C. 50
- New right turn lanes for eastbound and northbound traffic at Six Forks Road
- New turn lanes at Camp Kanata Road
- New dual left turn lanes at South Main Street

Long-term priorities include:

- Four-lane urban cross-section with median from U.S. 70 to Sherron Road
- Widen to four lanes from Sherron Road to Old Falls of Neuse Road
- Wake Forest road improvements from Old Falls of Neuse Road to Jones Dairy Road

- Widen to four lanes from Jones Dairy Road to U.S. 401

## **There are thousands of bike share rides in Durham. Are scooters coming next?**

The Herald-Sun By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan August 9, 2018

DURHAM – Dockless bike share bikes in Durham are getting a lot of use, and may soon be joined by electric scooters.

Dockless bike share companies caught Durham by surprise last fall, when companies showed up with hundreds of bicycles that could be rented by the ride. The city issued permits in November to three companies, whose bikes were recognized by their colors — green LimeBike, orange Spin and yellow Ofo bikes. Ofo bikes are leaving Durham, as the company is pulling its bikes from cities all over the United States.

Transportation Planner Bryan Poole told the Durham City Council on Thursday how much and how often bike share bikes in Durham have been ridden.

### **By the numbers:**

- Bike rides over eight months: 60,000
- Number of bikes: Limited to 500 per company. Between 1,000 and 1,400 were on the road.
- Reported accidents: 0

Of 1,150 people surveyed in July in person and online, 14 percent want the dockless bike share programs to end. Those who like them praised their flexibility, affordability and convenience. Of the people surveyed, 44 percent said they would be interested in electric scooters.

### **Scooters are coming**

Scooters are on the way. There are already electric scooters in Raleigh and Charlotte. Poole said that while electric bikes are the next thing in bike shares, electric scooters are more likely to be seen on Durham streets first.

The scooters have a smaller footprint than bikes, he said, and are rounded up at 8 p.m. each night, recharged and set back out in the morning, unlike bike shares.

Scooters are classified by the state as mopeds, which means riders must wear helmets. Their speed limit is 15 miles per hour, Poole said.

Fred Lamar, a senior city attorney, said scooters don't have to have a license plate but they have to be registered and have documentation on the vehicle. If operated at night, they need to have a light. Lamar said his reading of state law also suggests they need a rearview mirror.

"There are a number of hurdles these companies are going to have to overcome if operating on the streets," he said. "If not in the streets, they wouldn't necessarily fall to state law on mopeds ... but in Durham, we have ordinances that do not allow motorize vehicles or bicycles on the sidewalk."

He said the Bird scooters were dropped in Raleigh without consulting that city. Poole said Bird has also contacted Durham, but so far has not brought any scooters here.

Mayor Steve Schewel said that nobody seems to be using helmets on the bike shares.

"That's a challenge with bike shares," Poole said. "Bike shares are used for spontaneous trips, so don't carry your helmet with you." He said LimeBike has held helmet giveaways since coming to Durham.

The bikes are rented and unlocked by using a smartphone app. Council member Mark-Anthony Middleton wanted to know about cash-centric residents who don't have smartphones or credit cards. Poole said it's possible to buy bike share cards and then unlock the bikes with a code on the card, but that still has to be texted or called in to the company.

### **What's next**

The City Council didn't take any action on the presentation, just listened and made comments. The permits issued last fall were for only one year. In September, the city will open the permitting process and grant permits in October and November.

The city's transportation department recommended changes to the bike share ordinance:

- Broaden ordinance/permit definition to allow electric-assist bicycles and scooters.
- Develop ability to view parked units in real time, and report compliance problems.
- Increase amount of dedicated parking, especially in space constrained areas.
- Improve ordinance/permit language to increase compliance, cap total number of units to ensure management.
- Increase fees to more appropriately reflect the cost of staff oversight. The current fee is \$10 per bike.

Council member Charlie Reece said that the dockless bike share program has "exceeded my wildest dreams." He has ridden LimeBikes a dozen times and said the experience is pretty good.

## **Praise, complaints and a couple of injuries -- the jury's still out on those new scooters**

The News and Observer By Anna Johnson August 3, 2018

RALEIGH – Since electric scooters zoomed onto the streets of Raleigh last month, they've proven very popular with riders. But they've also brought some nuisance complaints and safety concerns.

At least two people have been injured riding the scooters from the Bird company.

Both of the accidents — one occurring on July 21 and the other on July 28 — involved people riding the scooters on Hillsborough Street. Each of the riders was hospitalized. Neither was wearing a helmet, said Donna-Maria Harris, a spokeswoman for the Raleigh Police Department.

Calls to the riders were not returned.

By comparison, Raleigh saw more than 40 vehicle accidents on July 21 and more than 60 on July 28.

The Bird scooters are primarily in downtown Raleigh, Cameron Village and the Oberlin area. The dockless scooters can be left in any public spaces after use. They are similar to the bright Lime bikes found around N.C. State University's campus.

People use their smartphones and the Bird company's app to unlock the scooters to ride them. It costs \$1 to unlock the scooter and 15 cents per minute after that.

They can reach speeds of up to 15 miles per hour and are picked up at night to be charged.

The city of Raleigh has discussed the scooters with the California-based Bird, but there is nothing new to report about possible regulations, said Raleigh Transportation Director Michael Moore.

"I would prefer not to get into detail nor make any comments until our discussions and our research are more compete," he said in an email.

The city did not coordinate the launch of the scooters with Bird. The company tends to arrive in cities unannounced. In some places, the scooters have been forcibly removed for not following city permitting processes.

Moore wouldn't confirm that the city considers the scooters as mopeds under state law — which would mean riders are required to wear a helmet. That was something the city's transportation department tweeted in July.

Hi Len - our attorneys have reached the conclusion that these are considered mopeds under state law, which requires a helmet for operation. Also, the Bird EULA clearly states that a helmet is required, and we would kindly ask that you revise your blog accordingly.

Len@lenraleigh

I test drove them yesterday: Bird Scooters in #Raleigh - Everything you need to know! <https://www.telapost.com/bird-scooters-raleigh/> ...

10:05 AM - Jul 14, 2018 · Raleigh, NC

According [to the rules people agree to before riding](#), riders must wear a helmet and are responsible for any injuries or damages. Despite that, hardly anyone riding the scooters downtown wears a helmet.

No citations or charges have been filed concerning the scooters, including any driving while impaired charges. But Raleigh police confirm that it is possible to get a DWI while on a Bird scooter.

[A handful of complaints](#) about the scooters have come through the city's resident portal SeeClickFix, which allows people to submit problems in the city such as a [neighbor's grass being too tall](#) or obstacles in the sidewalk.

One anonymous poster said they "took a bad fall" on Hillsborough Street after tripping over two scooters and that the scooters needed to be brighter and not left on the sidewalk. The city responded and said it contacted Bird.

"This issue has been forwarded onto Bird and requested they provide better direction and enforcement of their parking requirements that exist under their terms and conditions of use," according to the city's post.

Others complained the scooters were being left on sidewalks, sometimes making it difficult for pedestrians and people in wheelchairs to navigate.

"The things are a nuisance," said one anonymous poster. "People riding on the sidewalks is bad enough, but a group of 'hipsters' riding the Bird scooters the wrong way on Hillsborough Street into oncoming traffic."

## Is city moving too fast on Durham Belt Line? Some say slow down for fairer trail

The Herald-Sun By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan July 31, 2018

DURHAM – A new trail is coming to downtown Durham, and if you want a say in what it looks like and who uses it, now is the time to speak up.

The City Council will hold a public hearing Monday, Aug. 6, for the Durham Belt Line master plan, which would turn the old Duke Belt Line railroad tracks into a linear park.

For more than a decade, Durham has wanted to turn the old railroad spur — once used by Brodie Duke's company to transport tobacco within the city — into a trail.

But some people don't want the city to rush into turning the tracks into something that benefits just those with the most money, if people of more modest means can't afford whatever gets developed around the future trail.

The Belt Line's two miles of tracks go through the west side of downtown from the bus station, past West Village, past the Durham Athletic Park and up through Old North Durham, ending at Avondale Drive. Weeds and occasionally a tree grow between the railroad ties.

But soon the city will own the land and the council is set to approve a master plan to turn the tracks into a linear park that connects to existing and new parks and trails in and around downtown.

The draft master plan also calls for making the downtown loop into a two-way street.

One area of the Belt Line will connect with a project underway: the Ellerbe Creek stormwater restoration, which will bring urban wetlands and a boardwalk to the north side of downtown. That project, at 808 W. Trinity Ave., is expected to cost \$8 million, not including amenities, and will be funded primarily from the city's Stormwater Utility Fund.

Making the Belt Line a greenway for walkers and bicyclists with places to stop along the way is likely to draw people to it.

Nathaniel Smith, founder of the Partnership for Southern Equity in Atlanta, said young people want to live in dense, walkable areas, so you can "get your coffee or latte and ride your bike to work." That kind of connection, he said, leads to development around it.

#### Equity and the Belt Line

"I think the challenge is if you're not creating a Belt Line for everybody, if you're creating the circumstances that perpetuate a really separate but equal city, the only people who will be able to live around the Belt Line area are people who can afford million dollar homes, like in Atlanta," Smith said.

Smith is coming to Durham this week to talk about lessons from the Atlanta BeltLine, a project he left when he saw it wasn't going to be an equitable project for all. He doesn't think Atlanta leadership advanced the policies needed to manage the market as housing prices around the BeltLine increased.

He will speak about "Creating an Equitable Durham: Lessons from the Atlanta BeltLine" on Thursday, Aug. 2, at Shepherd's House United Methodist Church.

Smith was invited by the grassroots group Durham Belt Line for Everybody, started by Tara Mei Smith and Justin Robinson of Extra Terrestrial Projects. Tara Mei Smith recently asked the City Council to think about equity in every aspect of planning the Durham Belt Line.

It has taken a long time for the city to acquire the land, and it's close to sealing the deal on owning it after it was sold by Norfolk and Southern Railroad to The Conservation Fund and soon to the city with federal money through the N.C. Department of Transportation. At Monday's council meeting that will have the public hearing on the plan, the council will also vote on accepting \$8.4 million of federal funds. All that money covers the project through the design phase. Construction could be funded through private donations, grants and local, state and federal funding.

Mayor Steve Schewel said they can build a “fabulous, fabulous trail” that is truly for all of the community.

Nathaniel Smith urges them not to move too quickly.

“Time can really be the greatest enemy of equity,” Smith said. There are political and market implications, he said, but it’s still better to slow things down.

Talk to the community more, he advised. “Create as many opportunities as possible for the community to be heard.”

Smith said those supporting the Durham Belt Line should understand now the project could shift the market around it, before they build it.

“A reactionary approach to the market is never successful,” he said.

What’s next

- Nathaniel Smith will speak from 5:45 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 2, at Shepherd’s House United Methodist Church, 107 N. Driver St. Child care is available by calling 919-295-0483 or emailing [durhambeltlineforeverybody@gmail.com](mailto:durhambeltlineforeverybody@gmail.com).
- The Durham City Council will hold a public hearing on the Durham Belt Line draft master plan at its regular meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 6, at City Hall, 101 City Hall Plaza.

**ZZZZZ**

## **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

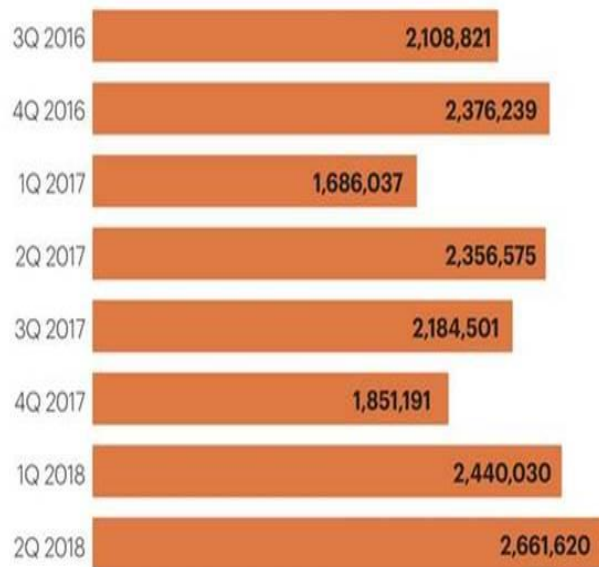
With cranes dotting the skylines above downtown Raleigh and Durham, it should come as no surprise that construction is booming. But the latest numbers show just how much activity is taking place in the Triangle's urban cores.

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.



Source: CoStar

[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.