

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting of September 5, 2007

Present: Bridgwater, Edeburn, Fowler, Harrison, Healy, Olive, Welch, Chris Berndt (new member, Chapel Hill Greenways Commission), Greg Schuster, Jane Korest, Dan Clever (Durham Open Space and Trails Comm. Chair, Durham Bike/Ped Committee Chair, Triangle Rail Trails), Pete Schubert (NC DOT Bicycle Committee, Durham Bike/Ped Committee), Doug Wilson (Chapel Hill Bike/Ped Advisory Board), Linda Gaines (Chapel Hill Bike/Ped Advisory Board), Doug Nichols (Triangle Land Conservancy), Richard Broadwell (Triangle Land Conservancy), Dale McKeel (Bike/Ped Coordinator for City of Durham also coordinates with Metropolitan Planning Organization)

- (1) Hollow Rock. The first meeting of the multi-jurisdictional Hollow Rock area planning group will be Sept. 18. Charlie Welch will be the NHCCAC representative, but also participating will be Harrison, Jacobs, Goebel and Korest. Healy suggested that part of the October 11 NHCCAC meeting be devoted to discussing some of our ideas for the Hollow Rock area, so they can be shared with the planning committee.
- (2) There will be a Leigh Farm planning meeting at Durham Dept. of Parks and Recreation, September 11 at 1 pm. Olive will attend on behalf of the NHCCAC (or send Joe Blackley).
- (3) Turkey Farm Bridge Replacement. Healy observed that the bridge contract is scheduled to be put to bid in March 2008, with NCDOT having planning meeting in January. Kent has provided Healy with copies of the plans, which show the new bridge with a bent (bridge pier) in the stream, unlike the present bridge. Despite this, and the fact that the stream contains endangered mussels, NCDOT has claimed a categorical exclusion for the project. Edeburn noted the need to involve the NC Natural Heritage Program, thorough Sarah McRae DNR ecologist. (He has since contacted her.)

Broadwell reported that Triangle Land Conservancy received a request for comments about a month ago, in conjunction with a request for occupancy of some of TLCs land during construction. Harrison suggested asking the Orange County Commission to request a presentation by NCDOT on this project.

McKeel noted that the Pickett Road bridge over Mud Creek is also scheduled to be replaced, as are the two bridges over Sandy Creek along Garrett Road.

(4) Discussion of Bike/Ped Planning

This was a wide-ranging discussion, and it was clear that we have just begun our task of trying to co-ordinate future New Hope trails with trails/bikepaths/bikelanes/sidewalks planned by others. It was clear that not only do we have to co-ordinate with others, but also there needs to be more co-ordination among the several entities concerned with non-vehicular transportation and recreation. For example it was noted that the City of Durham Open Space and Greenways was different from the Durham County Open Space and Trails Commission and that these two distinct entities do not always communicate. The city body is more concerned with safer bicycle and pedestrian transportation while DOST is more concerned with open space, and recreational and nature trails. [Scribe's note: Is this correct?—I thought DOST was a joint city/county body.] Our participation or even leadership in such a coordination effort seems timely because (1) most of the proposed non-motorized corridors in SW Durham are south of 15-501, apparently on the assumption that the area to the north was too wet for such use; (2) the demise—perhaps temporary—of the TTA rail plan means that trails planned for that corridor may no longer be possible.

Several participants encouraged the NHCCAC to do more specific planning for our trail system. This would involve two components (1) a general vision, e.g. a trail from Durham to Chapel Hill, linking Leigh Farm with other parks and providing pedestrian access from Forest View Elementary School to Hollow Rock to facilitate school education programs, and (b) site specific plans for our various corridors, taking into account topographical and other limitations.

As a first step toward this planning, it would be desirable to have a common data base and set of maps. On the NHCCAC side, this would include posting a map of the access corridors we have secured to date, many of which are now contiguous or near-contiguous. It would also include mapping the New Hope trails already in place.

Healy noted that the first step toward a common data base would be for our website www.newhopecreek.org to have links to whatever existing trail/bike/ped plans are available in electronic form. He will ask Webmistress Sally Robertson [<sally.robertson@earthlink.net>](mailto:sally.robertson@earthlink.net) to make a section of the website on “Trail Planning” and post links to such sites as:

2001 Durham Trails and Greenways Master Plan
www.durhamnc.gov/departments/planning/pdf/plan_greenway.pdf

2006 Durham Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan
www.durhamnc.gov/departments/works/bike_plan.cfm

2006 Durham Walks Pedestrian Plan
www.durhamnc.gov/durhamwalks/final_plan.cfm

Anyone having a link to post should send it to Sally.

In addition to this general discussion, several specific corridors were mentioned:

--it was noted that the Sandy Creek Trail shows that sanitary sewer easements can be used for trails (it is built on top of one). Korest pointed out that beaver activity and upstream development can change the underlying hydrology, posing problems for both the trail and the sewer;

--Harrison observed that Chapel Hill and UNC will shortly be making proposals for a rapid transit corridor that could also provide bike/ped access. He also noted that the widening of Hwy 54 in the future would provide options for a parallel trail.

--15/501 bridge. Construction is imminent and contracts are being signed. The new bridge will have a 10 ft. wide paved breakdown shoulder on each side. We discussed the possibility of some sort of minimal separation of the shoulder from the traffic lanes, perhaps with a pavement marking or a rumble strip, so as to give cyclists a little more protection from the automobile traffic. Healy raised the possibility of “hanging” a lightweight structure along the outside of the bridge in the future so as to accommodate a ped/bike path. McKeel said this is technically possible.

--it was noted that most Durham bike/ped trails go east-west rather than north/south, mostly because of concerns for wet areas. But there may be possibilities along Dry Creek (short existing trail behind New Hope Commons shopping center) and elsewhere. It was noted that there is a long term plan to put a bridge across I-40, allowing a direct internal automobile connection between New Hope Commons and East Towne. This could also be part of a longer distance trail system.

--Berndt said that Chapel Hill Greenways Commission will have a public forum on trails at 7 pm on Sept. 26 in the basement meeting room of CH main Public Library.

--Erwin Road. Now has some inadequate bike lanes. Healy noted that the NHCCAC may ask the Hollow Rock planning group to consider a sidewalk or other pedestrian trail along south side between Forest View Elementary and Hollow Rock so as to let students have access for the many educational activities put on there—students now have to take an activity bus to travel this short distance. McKeel raised issue of who would maintain sidewalk along Erwin, and noted that a recent change in state law allows counties to spend money for such a purpose.

--McKeel observed that nearly all of the major trails built locally had federal funding and thus had to have a transportation purpose.

--Healy said that after walking the site with Welch, they thought that the existing easement between Garrett Farms and the Lexan Apartments would be a good route for a non-paved scenic trail that would connect to a future trail on the east side of New Hope Creek, and on the other side would utilize an existing easement beside the property of the Church of the Good Shepherd and from there connect to Sandy Creek Park. This might be a priority for our planning effort. A paved trail might also be possible connecting the

paved Sandy Creek trail with 15-501 via the street behind Mark Jacobson Toyota and the sidewalk that will be built along the new Trammell Crow development.

--Edeburn mentioned possibility of extending Duke Forest to connect with Johnson Mill Preserve. This would enable yet another trail connection. Nichols and Broadwell said TLC is reassessing what additional projects it might undertake in the New Hope corridor.

**Next meeting, Thurs. October 11--- 5 pm --- Forest
View Elementary School**