

MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING
HOOD ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL
MAY 30, 2018 – 6:00 PM

PRESENT: Mayor Paul Bailey; Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon; Commissioners Barbara Dement, Chris Melton, Jeff Miller, Kress Query and John Urban

ALSO PRESENT: Facilitator Randy Mitchell; Transportation Advisory Committee members Bill Stevens, Vince Manno and David Teixeira; citizens Renee Garner, Rob Jacik, Larry Lester and Garry Smith; Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Public Works Director CJ O'Neill; Town Engineer Susan Habina Woolard; Planning and Development Director Kathi Ingrish; Public Works Intern Josh Rosenstein; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

Mayor Bailey noted that this group will continue to meet and talk about the group's preferences and objections to what is being shown by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT), but that the group needs to also start moving towards creating the ideas that it does want to see for John Street. He encouraged the public to continue to submit written comments throughout the process. Once this committee has come up with its final plan then it will be presented to the public and a public hearing will be held at a meeting of the Board of Commissioners. In the end the Board will adopt the final plan and it will be presented to DOT as the preferred vision from the Town. These plans are flexible and the Town will keep the public apprised as the committee continues its work.

Meeting facilitator Randy Mitchell reviewed the areas of focus as stated as pros and cons in the May 15th meeting (Exhibit #1 hereby referenced and made a part of these minutes). These areas of focus grouped similar comments into common subjects and their corresponding comments and include *aesthetics, pedestrian impact, traffic integration, intersections, property impact* and *other*. Some items fell under multiple categories and some pros can also be seen as cons depending on the issue.

There are some tradeoffs and compromises that need to be wrestled with. For example, medians allow safer right turn movements but they may require more of those U-turn bulbs that people don't like. Narrower medians require less right of way, yet they don't allow for lot of landscaping that people desire for aesthetic purposes. The multiuse path was identified as the most positive design element and people also like the landscape buffer but incorporating those requires more land. Mr. Higdon expressed concern with getting a fire truck down a U-turn in peak traffic. Mr. O'Neill explained there are ways of allowing emergency access that would also discourage vehicular access, such as median structures that can be navigated by emergency vehicles. Mr. Teixeira discussed traffic signals as another trade off: they allow ease of movement at intersections but slow down traffic overall. Mr. O'Neill noted that traffic lights also allow pedestrians to cross the road but stop vehicular traffic, and the signals slow traffic but allows more truck movements around the area, which means that the larger loons (U-turn bulbs) can be removed. Mr. Teixeira noted a possible unintended consequence of the project - more traffic flowing through areas like Sadie Drive.

There was some discussion of other area road projects that will impact traffic flow around Matthews. DOT could wait to design John Street until the impacts of those projects are fully understood. Mr. Blodgett explained that DOT has now modeled the traffic impact with McKee Road and the Weddington Road interchange included. DOT is still working on the analysis and the Town is waiting for the results of that report. Mr. Mitchell noted that the Town is operating under the premise that the report will indicate that something still needs to be done to John Street, so Matthews needs to be prepared for that possibility. If the report indicates that the project isn't necessary then so be it, but the preparations must be done. Mayor Bailey noted that an advantage of having the other road projects installed before John Street would be that it would train people to take alternate routes and maybe use John Street

less after that. Mr. Miller reviewed the list of other road projects and hoped John Street wouldn't be started or even evaluated until all the other projects were completed. Ms. Dement said it's important to make it convenient and attractive to travel around Matthews instead of through Matthews.

Mr. Manno asked if there was any concern with losing the funding for John Street if the project was delayed until after the other road projects are done. Mr. O'Neill explained that they're generally done on a minimum seven-year cycle. Mr. Manno noted that it isn't as simple as just holding off the widening – if the funds are lost it might take years to get them back again for a project that may be proven to be necessary. Mr. O'Neill explained that the state can't actually do all of these projects at once – they want to bring them all to the point that they're ready to be constructed and then actually do so one by one. The Town has been pushing DOT to work on Independence Boulevard after 485 and the Weddington Road interchange and McKee Road projects, which are already underway. Mr. Urban said rather than just waiting, the Town should present DOT with a concept plan that is acceptable to the town as a whole – that it's better to be proactive rather than just sitting and waiting for the other projects to be done.

Mr. Melton asked about the relationship between the three Highway 51 intersection projects as recently presented by DOT and the other road projects being discussed. Mr. O'Neill said they're related tangentially – they move traffic differently. They may keep some people from taking the Weddington Road interchange but they probably wouldn't divert people from John Street. The Highway 51 projects have already been funded – the 51 widening has funding available for construction in fiscal year 2021. Ms. Garner said DOT did an environmental assessment by studying what would happen by building a four-lane or six-lane road versus nothing. If nothing was done they said there would be a point at which people would refuse to come through Matthews because the traffic gets to that point. It wouldn't get to 20,000 or 30,000 more cars – it might only get to 7,000 more cars before people got tired of waiting in traffic and took other routes. It might get bad but there is a point at which people will choose a more efficient option.

Mr. Mitchell noted that there may be some questions about the demographics of the residents who live along John Street. Mr. Blodgett explained that on the north side of the street there are 19 homes. 11 are owner-occupied and 9 are rentals. On the south side there are 31 homes. 17 are owner-occupied and 14 are rentals. It's not a matter of absentee owners – there shouldn't be any assumptions made about that. Mr. Mitchell said there are 55-58% owner-occupied units along the road and the Town doesn't know if they'd prefer to keep their properties or sell them to the state. He asked the committee if the Town should approach those owners and ask about their preferences, perhaps by approaching them individually or holding a forum specifically for them. Mr. Query is concerned about keeping these owners in limbo – he wants them to know what is going to happen to their property. Ms. Garner explained she's been speaking with residents in person and talking about this project, and that the perception of renters being less worthy than property owners of maintaining their homes is elitist. There are a lot of young couples and others who want to move into Matthews and this is one of the few affordable areas in town. Mr. Miller agreed with the idea of seeking the affected peoples' opinions and recommended including the owner of the veterinarian clinic. He also said that the rest of the town will be essentially split so other residents should be asked to express their opinions as well. Ms. Garner noted that those directly impacted are working class and some work multiple jobs so it could be tough for them to attend a meeting in person. A paper survey might work better. She also urged for the inclusion of renters as well as owners. Staff will continue to work on this idea and it will be discussed at a future committee meeting.

The committee broke into small groups to work on their preferences for John Street. The small groups will have to discuss options, the associated impacts and potential tradeoffs and compromises of each design choice. These small group concepts will then be reviewed at the next meeting with discussion by the entire committee. The road was broken into three sections: the center section, between Charles Buckley Way and 485; the Charles Buckley Way intersection; and the downtown section focused on the John and Trade Streets intersection. Participants were asked to build their preferred options on a base map of each section with to-scale engineering options. See also Exhibit 1, hereby referenced and made a part of these minutes.

After working through the segments, the group discussed the process. Mr. Teixeira noted the uncertainty since they have no idea if NCDOT will accept any of these proposals. These designs may be what the town wants but if they don't help traffic flow then it seems unlikely that DOT will agree with it. Mr. Lester said the lack of flexibility with being able to move project money around could be a problem: if DOT doesn't agree to the Town's proposals then that funding may disappear – the sequencing flexibility is poor. Mr. Higdon said North Carolina Representative Bill Brawley has promised that if the Town comes forward with a consensus plan, he will do everything he can to convince DOT to do it. He's pretty high-ranking on the Transportation Committee so he may be able to help sway things in Matthews' favor as long as a reasonable plan is presented to DOT.

Each group presented their preferred options for each section of the road, starting with the middle section: Charles Buckley Way to 485. The first group reviewed its proposal, which includes two lanes, a 23-foot median, 5-foot sidewalk on one side and 10-foot multiuse path on the other. The extra median space is for large trees to make a beautiful gateway coming into town. The multiuse path would be on the greenway side where it comes out of Greylock Ridge Road. The travel lanes would be 11 feet wide to slow traffic.

The second group discussed their plan to mirror East and West John Street – what happens on one side would happen on the other as well. They had a split opinion on two lanes versus four lanes. Either way it would include a median of a width that would allow left turn lanes. At some place from Greylock Ridge Road in it would incorporate bulb-outs for tree plantings and parking on both sides of the road. A 10-foot multiuse path would be on the north side with a 5-foot sidewalk on the south side behind the green space. This would be the common cross section on both East and West John Street, so if it's only two lanes then the other two lanes on West John Street would have to be lost. There are breaks in the median for turning movements. The median doesn't have to be too large – maybe 17 feet wide – and would continue all the way to Highway 51. The bulb-outs are for planting areas for trees and to allow parallel parking areas between the bulb-outs. This public parking would probably start a couple hundred feet past Charles Buckley Way and the down to Greylock Ridge Road. The multiuse path on the north side is for the commercial and residential development that will eventually occur on the north side. It could be linked up to the south side to get to the greenway trail. If it's only two lanes then the travel lanes can be wider to accommodate shared/bike lanes.

The third group reviewed their plan for two 11-foot lanes, a 17-foot median with a multiuse path on the south side to connect to the greenway with an adjacent planting strip and a shared bike lane on the north side. It's not a consistent median all the way down - it would alternate for turns.

The group then discussed the downtown section. The first group discussed their plan to fight the traffic that starts at the El Valle area with traffic backing up because of the two lanes going into one lane. They proposed leaving it two lanes through the intersection with a left turn lane, then tapering the two lanes further down so there's no longer any backup. Currently there's one lane coming into town from Union County and it expands to two lanes by the post office. The proposed plan calls for leaving it as one lane through the intersection and going to two lanes at some point around or after the curve. That would eliminate the Matthews backup throughout the day and especially in the pm hours. Any am backup due to the two lanes merging onto one lane would occur somewhere near 485 and would encourage those drivers to take 485 to Independence or the future Greylock Ridge extension. There would be no widening of the footprint or taking of houses with this plan. The existing left turn lanes would remain. The basic premise is one through lane toward Charlotte and two through lanes going to Union County with the merge to one lane occurring towards the 485 overpass or Union County.

The second group reviewed their plan to add a lane from the Exxon station going straight or right with the left lane remaining a left turn only. They added a median to help eliminate traffic accidents. They added a lane in front of the Kangaroo station, which would be a right hand only lane onto Trade Street. Coming from 51 through Matthews across Trade Street are two lanes with a single straight through lane at the intersection and a second right-only or straight lane. There would be two lanes going away from Charlotte and one though lane going into Charlotte. The intersection should be a full stop intersection for pedestrian movement.

The third group maintains the intersection of Trade and John Street intact and adds a several hundred-foot-long tunnel before and after the intersection. There would be an express lane that would go underneath and pop out on the other side of the intersection while the local lanes would remain as they are. Trade Street would basically be an overpass. Two lanes would come in with parking alongside; the parking would end and then the two lanes would split between the tunnel and surface access. There would be a large grassy median and the road width would be the minimum needed to get the grade required to make it work. Drivers would exit off to get to the top surface to downtown. It could have two lanes all the way to 51 or incorporate the design with the parking on either side and the median. The idea would be to preserve the existing footprint and the intersection would look basically the same.

The groups then discussed the Charles Buckley Way intersection. The groups had the same general plans as the Charles Buckley Way to 485 segment ideas discussed earlier with minimal footprint changes, left turn lane and medians.

The group will continue to work toward consensus at its next meeting, the date of which will be determined and publicized as soon as possible. The group will not be ready to take in-person public comments at the next meeting as previously thought but comments may be made in writing and via the town website throughout the meeting process.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk

MEMORANDUM

TO: Susan Habina-Woolard, PE, Town Engineer
FROM: Josh Rosenstein, Public Works Dept MPA Intern
RE: Comparing Results of John Street Cross Sections from May 30 meeting
DATE: June 8, 2018

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

On May 30, 2018 the Board of Commissioners met for the second time with facilitator Randy Mitchell and a committee of key staff, advisory board members, and other citizens to discuss the Town of Matthews position on the NCDOT's plan to widen East John Street. The committee is seeking to find agreement or consensus on what options they would like to request from NCDOT.

At the meeting, the committee was broken into three groups, each containing Commissioners, Transportation Advisory Committee Members and citizen volunteers. Public Works Director CJ O'Neill provided each group with a prepared map of three roadway section types along the corridor of John Street along with roadway elements made out of foam (i.e. vehicle lanes, sidewalks, planting strips.) The small groups then laid out proposals for the road, placing the various elements on the map, while town staff was on hand to answer technical questions.

This memorandum provides photographs and narrative descriptions of the group's road plans and discusses the similarities and differences of the plans. It also recommends forwarding these findings to Mr. Mitchell and meeting to formulate a plan before the committee meets again on June 19.

GROUP MEMBERS

Group 1: Commissioners Barbara Dement & Jeff Miller, Mayor Pro Tem John Higdon, Transportation Advisory Committee member Bill Stevens and community member Rob Jacik.

Group 2: Commissioners Chris Melton & Kress Query, Transportation Advisory Committee member David Teixeira and community members Renee Garner and Larry Lester.

Group 3: Mayor Paul Bailey, Commissioner John Urban, Transportation Advisory Committee member Vince Manno and community member Garry Smith

SECTION A (DOWNTOWN)

Group 1:



Group 1's plan includes a 5' sidewalk and 4' planting strip on both sides of the road and on both East and West John Street. On East John, approaching Trade Street, there were an 11' travel lane and a left turn lane onto South Trade. On East John going away from Trade Street were two 11' travel lanes. On West John approaching Trade were two 11' travel lanes and a left turn lane onto North Trade. Separated by a 4' foot median, there was a single 11' travel lane in the other direction (away from Trade Street).

Group 2:



Group 2 took the existing street cross section and added an eastbound through lane and, on the west side of the intersection, a 4' median that would restrict vehicles from entering the left turn

lane from nearby driveways. This resulted in one westbound through lane, two eastbound through lanes, left turn lanes in each direction on to Trade Street, a 4' median on the west side of the intersection, and 5' back-of-curb sidewalks on both sides of the John Street.

Group 3:



Group 3's plan was more conceptual in nature called for a bypass tunnel where travelers planning to pass through and not stop in Matthews would pass under downtown via a tunnel. The at-grade section (on top of the tunnel) contains an 11' eastbound travel lane and a 14' westbound shared travel lane (cars and bikes) separated by an 8' planted median. The tunnel aspect of this road section is so conceptually different that it makes comparison with the other sections difficult.

SECTION A CONCLUSIONS

Both of the non-tunnel plans call for **sidewalks, left-turn lanes onto North and South Trade Street and an additional eastbound lane of travel** on John Street. Differences exist between the plans regarding planting strips, medians, separating a turn lane with a median, and the number of westbound travel lanes on on John Street after it passes Trade Street.

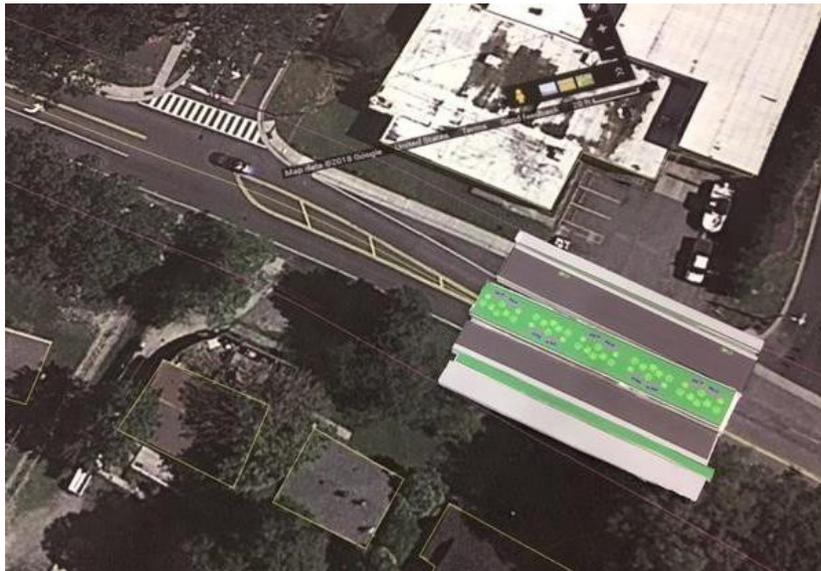
SECTION B (CHARLES BUCKLEY WAY)

Group 1:



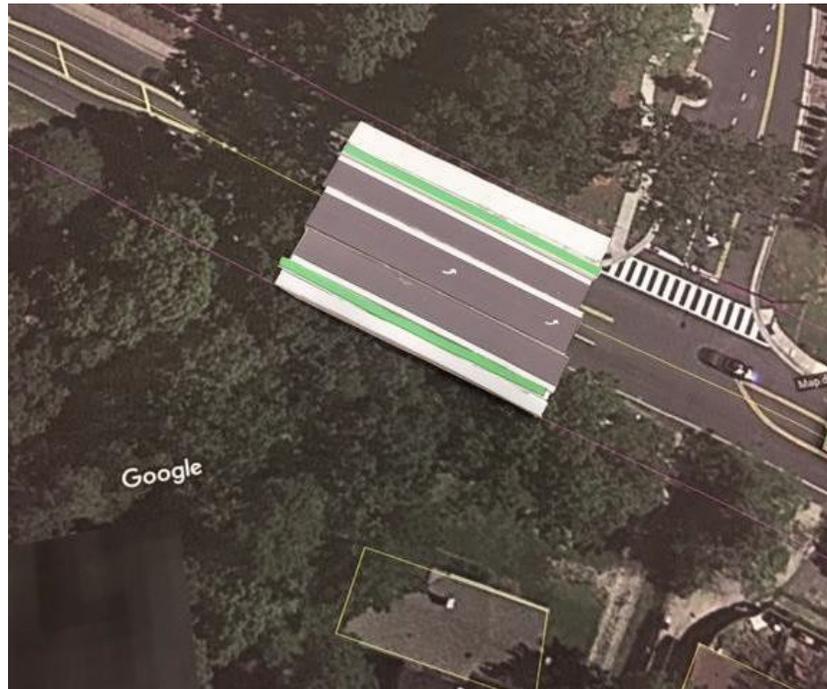
Group 1's plan for this section had 4' planting strips on both sides of the street, a 10' multi-use path (MUP) on the south side of the street and a 5' sidewalk on the north side of the street. Traveling east was an 11' travel lane and 23' planted median that changed to a left turn lane and 6' median onto Charles Buckley Way. Traveling west was an 11' travel lane.

Group 2:



Group 2's plan for this section had a 10' MUP and a 4' planting strip on the south side of the street and a 5' sidewalk with no planting strip on the north. It had an 11' eastbound travel lane and a 14' shared travel lane (bicycles and vehicles) going west, separated by a 23' planted median.

Group 3:



Group 3's plan for this section had 4' planting strips on both sides of the road, a 5' sidewalk and on the south side and a 10' MUP on the north side of East John Street. It had an 11' travel lane in each direction and a left turn lane onto Charles Buckley Way.

SECTION B CONCLUSIONS

All three plans called for MUPs in this section, though there was disagreement on which side of the road with two groups placing the MUP on the south side and one on the north side. All the plans called for a **sidewalk** on the side of the street that did not have an MUP. Two of the three plans called for a **left turn lane into Charles Buckley Way** (the other did not address that section). All three plans called for **4' planting strips** (two of them had planting strips on both sides, one on just the south side adjacent to the MUP). All three plans called for **only one lane of travel in each direction**. Two of the plans included a **23' planted median** at some point. The size of median, pedestrian refuge, and shared travel lanes were all points of disagreement between the plans.

SECTION C (NEIGHBORHOOD SECTION)

Group 1:



Group 1's plan for this section had a 5' sidewalk on the north, a 10' MUP on the south, and 4' planting strips on both sides of the street. They had an 11' travel lane in each direction separated by a 23' planted median.

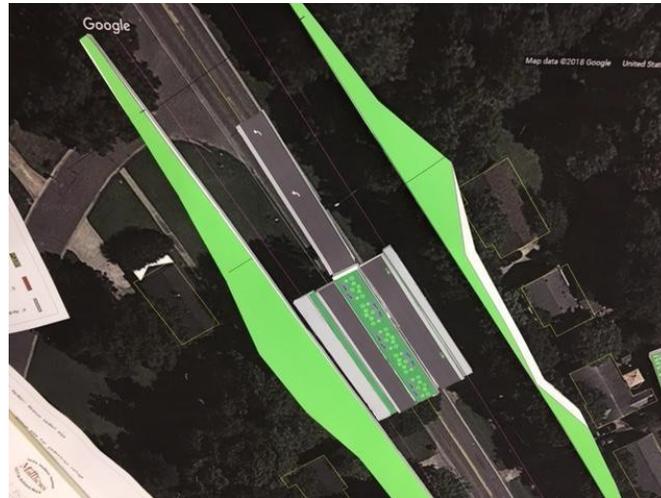
Group 2:



Group 2's plan had a 10' MUP on the north, a 5' sidewalk on the south and 4' planting strips on both sides of the street. This plans had one 11' travel lane going in each direction and a left turn

lane onto the side street. Before the turn lane was a 23' planted median and after the turn lane were two side by side 8' planting strips that likely was intended as a planted median.

Group 3:



Group 3's plan had a 5' sidewalk and no planting strip on the north side and a 10' MUP with a 4' planting strip on the south side of the street. They had a westbound 14' shared travel lane and an eastbound 11' travel lane separated by a 23' planted median. The planted median transitioned into a westbound left turn lane onto the side street.

SECTION C CONCLUSIONS

All three plans had **23' planted medians** at some point. Each plan included a **10' MUP and 5' sidewalk** on opposite sides of the street; two had the MUP on the south and the sidewalk on the north, the other reversed that. Two had 4' planting strips on both sides, whereas one plan only had it on the south side of the road adjacent to the MUP. All plans included **only one travel lane in each direction**, with one plan showing the westbound lane as a shared lane. Two of the plans included a **left turn lane onto the side street**, and the other plan did not address that part of the road.
