

# InterNeighborhood Council of Durham Resolutions on Transit

Philip Azar [REDACTED]

Sent: 9/22/2015 2:46 PM

To: [REDACTED]  
info@ourtransitfuture.com

Cc: [REDACTED]

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Please find attached a cover letter regarding a series of INC resolutions on transit and related matters. Also attached are the specific resolutions.

Although cc:ed on the letter, info@ourtransitfuture is in the to: line above in the hope that these will be considered comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Sincerely,

Philip Azar  
President, InterNeighborhood Council of Durham

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Attachments:  [Transit Coverletter.pdf](#)  [Transit Resolutions.pdf](#)

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# InterNeighborhood Council of DURHAM



September 22, 2015

Durham County Board of Commissioners  
Durham City Council  
GoTriangle

**Subject: Resolutions Regarding an Alston Avenue Light Rail Stop, Design and Route issues in Western Portions of Durham City and County, Rail Siting Processes and Planning Efforts Related to Transit**

Dear Members of the Durham County Board of Commissioners, Durham City Council Members, and GoTriangle Leadership:

I am writing to you regarding a series of resolutions passed by the InterNeighborhood Council of Durham.

The first two resolutions focus on ends of the proposed rail corridor in Durham County. The first resolution calls for more attention to the need for a true Alston Avenue site. An Alston Avenue stop is seen as important in and of itself, but also to keep open the possibility of a rail service yard in East Durham and eventual light rail service to Durham Tech. The second resolution focuses on improved design as light rail heads west, entering Chapel Hill's planning jurisdiction, but remaining within Durham City and/or Durham County. In addition to design and route issues, it addresses the need Durham elected officials to engage with concerned neighborhoods, even if technical responsibility for planning the stops in those neighborhoods has been delegated to Chapel Hill.

The resolutions in the second set are not stop-specific. The first of these (third overall) is entitled, "Overarching Resolution Regarding Rail Siting" and addresses the need for more meaningful and direct discussions with neighborhoods, increased citizen outreach, and the importance of ensuring that plans to service low-income residents are accelerated. The second non-site specific resolution (fourth overall) is entitled "Resolution for a more inclusive, in-depth process for public involvement in planning 'Compact Neighborhoods' and 'Compact Design Districts' with higher-density development zoning around proposed light rail stations in Durham." It addresses the complexity of the existing process, which undermines resident participation unless balanced by a greater commitment to best practices and neighborhood involvement (even if the Planning Department would need to help with neighborhood education efforts) and the need to work in a determined and genuine manner to provide equitable solutions around neighborhood stability and livability, affordability for resident and businesses, and greater access to more transit options.

Overall, the resolutions show that Durham neighborhoods and residents are concerned with the planning and engagement process around rail. INC has reached out to the Planning Department to try to work together on issues raised in the last resolution, and the response has been very positive. In the midst of these concern, it is worth noting that INC remains committed to improvements in our transit system. Please read the resolutions in full.

Sincerely,

Philip Azar

cc: Durham Delegation to General Assembly  
Durham City/County Planning Department  
[info@ourtransitfuture.com](mailto:info@ourtransitfuture.com)

## Resolution Regarding the Alston Street Light Rail Station Site

The Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council has given careful attention to the recent announcement by the Triangle Transit Authority to move the Alston transit station one quarter mile west on Pettigrew to a location near Grant Street. East Durham is not well served by this change, and we call for TTA to identify a site east of Alston Avenue.

TTA made presentations to our organization and other organizations and groups in Northeast Durham about the plans for station locations in the light rail system, and we are distressed that TTA did not request our input or inform us of the possible change in the station site before making this new recommendation to a meeting of the Durham City Council and County Commission on January 13, 2015. To be true to the statements from TTA about how light rail would serve East Durham, we think it is essential that they continue to look for ways to place the station in a location east of Alston Avenue.

The NECD Leadership Council opposes the Grant Street location for the following reasons:

- The Grant Street location will not serve the heart of northeast Durham as well as a site east of Alston Avenue.
- The Grant station site would be three-quarter miles rather than one-half mile from Driver Street which is a focus of economic revitalization efforts by the neighborhood and the city. The Grant station is less convenient for pedestrians using the Bryant Bridge who would have to walk an additional quarter mile to reach the Grant Street location.
- The Grant station site would be three-quarter mile rather than one-half mile from MacDougald Terrace.
- The Grant station is would be less than a half mile from the Dillard/Fayetteville Station and that station would serve many of the same residential areas that would be served by the Grant Street location.
- The new location would reduce the likelihood of placing the light rail Operations and Maintenance Facility in East Durham and eliminate the possibility that light rail could ever be extended to a new station that would directly service Driver Street, Briggs Avenue, and Durham Technical Community College.<sup>1</sup> The light rail system should be planned now in a way that keeps open the possibility of extension in the future.

Fundamentally, the level of light rail service promised to East Durham would not be provided and possible future enhancements would be eliminated by the using the Grant Street station site.

TTA has announced that the Alston station cannot be at its exact original site north of the water tower on Pettigrew, but that does not mean that pulling the line farther back from East Durham is the only or best option. TTA has realigned the light rail with only slight shifts in the location of other stations in the latest version of the plan. They should make the same effort to keep the station east of Alston by moving the line outside the railroad right of way. The light rail line could be moved closer to NC147 with its own bridge over Alston Street at Gann Street and a station placed close to the Bryant Street bridge. We call for a balanced assessment of the pros and cons of this and other potentially feasible alternative sites east of Alston for the current eastern terminal station in the light rail system.

This 23th day of June 2015.

THE INTERNEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL OF DURHAM

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Phil Azar,  
President

## **Resolution on Little Creek Light Rail Route**

Submitted May 26, 2015

**Whereas** local and regional authorities including GoTriangle (formerly Triangle Transit Authority), the City of Durham, the Town of Chapel Hill, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHMPO), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation are all presently engaged in forming plans for a proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail line;

**Whereas** two routes under consideration, "C2" and "C2A," would use the south side of the N.C. Route 54 right-of-way to cross the Little Creek section of that proposed rail line;

**Whereas** either of those routes would require the creation of several dangerous grade-level rail crossings that obstruct access to and across N.C. Route 54 for residents of several Durham and Chapel Hill neighborhoods;

**Whereas** another route under consideration, "C1A," would carry the light rail line across Little Creek north of N.C. Route 54 and through Chapel Hill's "Meadowmont" subdivision;

**Whereas** the Town of Chapel Hill's 1995 approval of the creation of Meadowmont was predicated on the future routing of light rail there;

**Whereas** a "C1A" route through Meadowmont would draw ridership from a population that exists in place today, made up of people who bought or built their homes in an area posted as a future transit corridor, while a "C2" or "C2A" route would draw ridership only from a possible future population based on apparent plans shared by the Town of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill;

**Whereas** Downing Creek, a member neighborhood of this council, has by vote of its community association board resolved to oppose light rail construction along either the "C2" or "C2A" corridor, and more than ninety percent of Downing Creek residents have responded to a survey by saying they are "strongly opposed" to these routes;

**Whereas** in the course of several meetings, the authorities in control of this rail planning process have been dismissive of local residents' opinions and of their research into the relevant traffic and safety issues, as summarized online at [Transit.DowningCreek.Org](http://Transit.DowningCreek.Org);

### **Be it resolved that**

1. The Interneighborhood Council of Durham recognizes that the several neighborhoods south of N.C. Route 54 in the affected area, including member community Downing Creek, strongly objected to any light rail construction along proposed routes "C2" or "C2A"
2. and concludes in its own right that the proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail project *should use every effort to* follow the originally intended path through Meadowmont, as represented by current option "C1A" or an alternative route with less negative impact on our communities.

3. and calls upon all elected and appointed officials whose jurisdiction includes the light rail planning project to take heed of these community resolutions and to work constructively with Downing Creek and other neighborhood leaders in finding appropriate alternatives
4. and hereby directs its President to publish this resolution and directly to the Durham City Council, the Durham County Board of Commissioners, and the members of the state legislative delegation who represent the affected area.

This 23th day of June 2015.

THE INTERNEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL OF DURHAM

By: 

Phil Azar,  
President

### **Overarching Resolution Regarding Rail Siting Process**

Whereas local and regional authorities including GoTriangle (formerly Triangle Transit Authority), the City of Durham, the Town of Chapel Hill, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHMPO), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation are all presently engaged in forming plans for a proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail line;

Whereas neighborhoods and other groups continue to have concerns with the proposed routes – safety of at-grade crossings, impact on businesses, difficulties of pedestrian crossing, and reach into the eastern part of the city – and would like to see these concerns treated seriously;

Whereas there have been concerns about sharing of working maps and other materials;

Whereas although it is clear GoTriangle staff has worked hard to schedule public meetings and put a large amount of expertise and effort into the presentations made at these meetings, citizens feel they have not been listened to when they ask about anything other than the results of staff studies;

Whereas meetings with neighborhoods and other groups should be part of a dialogue where GoTriangle uses its expertise to meet groups and individuals “where they are” and not opportunities to reiterate reasons for supporting positions already taken;

Whereas INC has passed resolutions about a stop east of Alston Avenue and the alignment near Little Creek;


Whereas INC has passed resolutions in support of light rail;

Be it resolved that:

1. INC continues to endorse such improvements in our transportation system.
2. GoTriangle is encouraged to have more meaningful direct discussions with neighborhoods to address their concerns, using real world light rail examples and offering Youtube examples and specific examples from other transit systems, especially Charlotte.
3. GoTriangle is encouraged to explore new ways to promote citizen involvement.
4. Durham should proceed with plans to link the new Amtrak and bus stations with a pedestrian crosswalk as a downpayment against promises that transit expenditures will also benefit low-income residents that do not live in or immediately adjacent to downtown, and who rely on bus service linkage to rail. Failing that, other plans to serve low-income residents in meaningful manners should be accelerated so that the benefits of transit are shared more equitably.

This 25th day of August 2015.

THE INTERNEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL OF DURHAM

By:   
Phil Azar,  
President

**Resolution for a more inclusive, in-depth process for public involvement in planning “Compact Neighborhoods” and “Compact Design Districts” with higher density development zoning around proposed light rail stations in Durham (AKA Resolution on Density around Rail Stations)**

Whereas, in Spring and Summer 2015, Durham City and County staff put significant effort into the community meetings as part of the process of planning “Compact Neighborhoods” with higher density development around proposed light rail stations;

Whereas, residents, businesses and institutions in and near proposed “Compact Neighborhoods” may be displaced with the largest impact on lower income residents who would have the greatest difficulty finding homes they can afford;

Whereas, many residents who live in “Compact Neighborhoods” did not get mailed notices of these meetings;

Whereas public input was limited to drawing lines for “Compact Neighborhoods,” with no discussion of the impact of high density development on residents or how the public and residents would be involved in planning for their neighborhoods in the future;

Whereas, the public has not seen an analysis of the impact of higher density development already happening Downtown, 9th Street, and Duke/VA Hospital;

Whereas, the plan for development around 9<sup>th</sup> Street was aided immensely by participation and expertise from the community;

Whereas, new methods of public engagement are being used across the country to create dialog within communities and increase public knowledge, leaving them less dependent on outside experts (see Example);

Whereas, planning principles should support neighborhood values, including neighborhood stability, character, and smooth transitions among uses, and planning’s rule of drawing lines between back yards does not support this value;

Whereas, Durham City-County Planning did not include adequate neighborhood involvement in creating “Compact Neighborhoods” and has not specified how the community would be involved in planning for “Compact Design Districts;”

Whereas, once “Compact Design Districts” are in place, the public will have no say in what is built;

Therefore, the InterNeighborhood Council (INC) of Durham resolves that:

Before adopting plans for “Compact Neighborhoods” with higher density development near future light rail stations, we ask the City and County to:

1. Investigate and implement best practices around the country for building a dialog among members of the community as well as with experts;

2. Inform the public about the potential impact of higher density development, including the effects of higher zoning, taxes, rents, and home prices on the stability of local neighborhoods, small businesses, institutions, and residents;
3. Involve the public in a more inclusive, in-depth planning process with:
  - a. Neighborhood Planning Committees for each transit station with members of local neighborhoods, businesses, institutions, and residents who would be most affected by higher density development, and
  - b. Training and involvement of community members in leadership of Neighborhood Planning Committees.
4. Work in a determined and genuine manner to provide equitable solutions to ensure that:
  - a. Neighborhoods stay stable and livable,
  - b. Homeowners, home buyers, and renters can stay in safe, sustainably affordable homes and have opportunities for new homes they can afford long-term,
  - c. Small businesses and local institutions can continue and have options for comparable locations, and
  - d. Residents can access light rail transit with safe sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and bus stations.

This 25th day of August 2015.

THE INTERNEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL OF DURHAM

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Phil Azar,  
President



# Transit

Philip Azar [REDACTED]

Sent: 9/25/2015 1:58 PM

To: [REDACTED] info@ourtransitfuture.com, "Steve Schewel" [REDACTED], "Brett Fox" [REDACTED]

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Since I am now INC past president, I am freer move about the cabin and voice my own opinions with regard to light rail than when I was INC president, with resolutions pending.

I think we need to stress the importance of serving East Durham and expanding/accelerating service to low-income communities in other ways. Transit must improve with equity.

I think it is also important that we keep our eyes on the main issue: Light rail helps us build with greater density in the future. Density has follow-on impacts on many things that we care about, including neighborhood displacement and environmentally sensitive lands. Adding density gives residents more options about where to live and makes sure that the desire to live in and around downtown does not create a zero-sum game where relatively wealthy newcomers are more likely to displace existing residents. We need to use market-based solutions as well as affordable housing.

With regard to comments regarding service to East Durham and/or light rail design issues, they should not be taken as opposing Durham managing its growth with density or as Durham being opposed to rail. On the contrary, I think that there is support for using density as a key aspect of managing our growth and for using rail and other transit enhancements to improve equity in our city. A transit-oriented future that works for Durham residents and connects us to as much of the Triangle as possible is a huge positive!

With Thanks and Peace,

Philip Azar

**Note 1:** In any comments to [info@ourtransitfuture.com](mailto:info@ourtransitfuture.com) on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement or to public officials, please keep the tone positive and make clear that you are pro-rail and/or transit (if true) and want Durham to manage our growth with density, equity and improved transit options.

**Note 2:** I have added [info@ourtransitfuture.com](mailto:info@ourtransitfuture.com) at the to: line since that is the place to send official comments. There will also be a public hearing with the County Commissioners Thursday, October 1, from 4-7 p.m. a 200 E. Main Street, Durham, NC 27701 (2 minutes per speaker). Copies of the draft environmental impact statement are at <http://ourtransitfuture.com/>. Listserv discussions may serve a purpose for organizing and education, but they don't count as official comments.