

MORGAN CREEK TRAIL PUBLIC FORUM (FEBRUARY 20, 2017)

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The following comments were received in writing at the February 20, 2017 Morgan Creek Trail Public Forum. The public forum was held to share early (25%) drawings and to gather comments. Below are our initial responses to any questions received. Some comments not related directly to the design or were about levels of support have been noted, but do not have responses. We have attempted to segregate the comments in four categories:

1. General comments
2. Bridge at Ashe Place (Phase 2)
3. Merritt's Pasture to Otey's Road (Phase 1)
4. Parking Lot to Carrboro line (Phase 3)

Please note that we will no longer use the terms Phase 1 through 3 since they imply that decisions have already been made concerning timing. No such decisions have been made.

Below are preliminary responses to the questions raised. Very few decisions have been made. We will continue to solicit input as the designs move forward.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. Please clarify what kind of funding will be used. Bond money or DOT \$. The former \$ as you know allows you to be more flexible to resident interests.

Response: At this time all funding is through the 2015 Greenways bond. We are always on the outlook for other funding sources, but at this time have not been able to identify any other funding source.

2. There is no evidence whatsoever that greenways increase crime in an area. Furthermore, I know of no added noise because of greenways. How can I support these projects?

Response: Noted. Please continue to attend these meeting and provide comments to improve the projects.

3. The presentation was not well organized and difficult to follow. The room was too small and overcrowded. The presenters stood in front of a few wall posters outlining the proposals, making it difficult to read the posters. Why not use the excellent audio visual equipment provided by the library to present a PowerPoint presentation? Attendees seemed to be confused about the phasing of the project. A clearer explanation would be helpful. I would like this presentation to be given at the next Kings Mill - Morgan Creek Neighborhood Association meeting. I will get back in touch.

Response: Noted. We would be happy to attend a neighborhood meeting.

4. Please consider another phase behind Dogwood Drive connecting to the Morgan Creek Path (under route 54) and Merritt Mill Parkway towards Carrboro.

Response: A route through the utility easement is being recommended as a part of the draft Mobility Plan from McCauley St to the Morgan Creek Trail. This plan will soon be making the rounds of advisory boards and will then go to Council. The idea is outside the scope of this project.

5. I support all of the phases, but phase 3 more than either of the other phases. I don't agree with the order of the phases and would like to see phase 3 first.

I support (Merritt's Pasture to Otey Drive (Phase 1) first and Bridge at Ashe Place (Phase 2) second.

My priority order: 1. Bridge, 2. Trail West, 3. Trail along Fordham East

These are all great projects. Phase 1, 2, 3 are in the exact priority.

Response: We will no longer use the terms Phase 1 through 3. The terms were not meant to be suggestive of order of construction. They were given these terms so that planners would be able to quickly identify which section is being discussed. It is most likely that the Council will decide which sections to build and in which order. The draft Mobility Plan may include recommendations as to how these phases should be prioritized.

6. How will property owners be approached/compensated in cases where an easement will be required? (Our property is already about 25% easement - - OWASA - - and I'm just curious how that will work.)

Response: If easements are required we will meet with the property owner and carefully explain the process. We would acquire only what is absolutely needed to build the project. In some cases easements might be permanent and in other cases easements would be temporary. We would need to acquire permission from the Council prior to purchasing the easements or property. We will follow all of the steps required by law to compensate landowners. Landowners will be fully compensated based on actual appraisals of the land. The Town would hire an independent appraiser and then make an offer. If the owner believes the offer is too low the property owner can hire another appraiser. Negotiation is possible, as is redress in the courts. Preliminary plans indicate that there should be very few needs for easements outside of existing public ownership or NCDOT right of way.

7. Go Greenways! A good thing for our communities!

Response: Noted

8. Strong support for projects

Response: Noted

9. One selling point for connectivity that you didn't mention - reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A local way to fight global warming. May be especially important now.

Response: Noted

10. Expand parking lot **significantly** current lot full on weekends.

Response: We are currently designing an expansion of the parking lot. We are aware that it fills and that it will likely fill even more as the trail extends to new neighborhoods and destinations such as the future Obey Creek development.

11. Please consider planting species native to the area when landscaping. Myrtle or inkberry instead of arborvitae, for instance.

With the concern of privacy and trespassing issues; from my experiences dense plantings and plants that deter people work. Dense junipers, sharp holley's, thorn bushes, even poison ivy with signs will deter people.

Plant trees (maybe chestnuts?) along the trail.

Response: We will develop full landscape plans for each segment. With the possible exception of evergreen screening we intend to use only plants native to this region. We sometimes use evergreen plants native to other regions of North America if they have superior benefits related to screening. Trees will be placed where appropriate. We look forward to the day when American Chestnut trees grow once again in the woodlands of Chapel Hill. The American Chestnut Foundation reports that they are making progress toward development of a native chestnut tree that will survive chestnut blight and root rot disease. However they are probably at least one generation away from developing a tree that is blight resistant.

12. Make curves natural. Most greenways in Chapel Hill have sharp curves and straight portions of trail. Make the shape of the trail more like the Blue Ridge Parkway. When a trail has a natural curve it is WAY more beautiful. Example: the American Tobacco Trail in South point is really unpleasant to bike on. The trail North of South point is beautiful. Existing paved Tanyard Branch trail is nice too!

Response: We already do this whenever possible. For example the Lower Booker Creek Trail just north of Eastgate Shopping Center. However, more often than not we are restricted to very narrow easements or confined by natural barriers. This issue often force us to build straight paths.

13. Bury the ugly power lines.

Response: Unlike neighborhood distribution lines it is not possible to bury the large Duke Energy transmission lines in this area.

14. Strongly support providing bike & ped connectivity. Greatly appreciate work being done by town consultants. Think major issues have been thoughtfully addressed.

Response: Noted

15. I like the ideas of working with the neighboring property owners and if there are specific issues and remedies (and solutions) for a specific location let's hear them, put plantings on the private property to create specific solutions. It might be worthwhile to have a meeting just to address these concerns and work out the solutions. This specific meeting would make the bigger more comprehensive meetings flow better and it would show that the concerned and nervous property owners know that they are being respected and listened to.

Response: We have already met with some of the most affected neighbors. It will be our intent to continue to meet in small groups or individually with those neighbors who would be the most impacted. We do this with most projects and have found it to be a useful approach. We frequently offer to plant landscaping on private property if it would work better in that location. In most cases we maintain any such landscaping for one year. After the one year warranty maintenance of any landscaping on private property would be the responsibility of the landowner.

16. Also don't greenways and bike trails increase property values? Please let me know these stats.

Response: We are not aware of definitive studies on the issue, although it seems likely that property value studies related to trails do exist. We do know that when selling a home in Chapel

Hill that it is common practice to advertise that it is on or near a greenway.

17. I live abut to Carolina North Forest and the OWASA ROW literally kisses the back of our yard. Never have we had an issue with trespassing or litter and it is used for walking daily.

Response: We believe that all of our trails are very litter free due to the excellent habits of our citizen users. We sometimes have issues with dog waste, which we will try to address with this plan. We have never received a complaint about trail users trespassing on private property with one notable exception. We have received numerous complaints about people trespassing on private property downstream of Merritt's Pasture.

MERRITT'S PASTURE TO OTEY DRIVE (PHASE 1)

1. Our house is next to the proposed route. We are very concerned about the increase in traffic and exact route - how near to our house it will be. We want it, if it has to be built, to be as far away from our house.

Response: As we develop more detailed plans we will be able to provide more information on distances from individual private properties.

2. Our house has been broken into 3 times recently & we really do not want lots of people walking by our back door.

Response: Noted.

3. Better route: extend southern Merritt's Pasture path to far southeast corner and attain connectivity via aesthetic walled/landscaped path between 2 properties: Cheaper, Far fewer impacted, Much more scenic

Response: We believe that such a solution would likely require condemnation of at least one private property and would require that the trail would be squeezed between two homes. It appears at this time that the current design would use existing public property and right of way and would allow the project to move forward with no additional property acquisition. For this reason we disagree that the proposed solution would be less expensive. While it might impact fewer people the impact to those affected properties would be much greater.

4. Trail extension along Fordham between Hawthorne & Otey's: Very steep grade (60+ degree), retaining wall would look unattractive, wooden boardwalk would be much more attractive.

Response: We will consider this suggestion. However, we would likely consider some product other than wood. We know from experience that wood boardwalks are often slippery when wet and are expensive to maintain.

5. Littering: The more people passing by my house, the more trash around my property. Place trash cans along trail.

Response: We will consider options for trash receptacles as part of the plan.

6. Parking: People may try to park along Oteys Road right in front of my house. Prohibit parking signs should be placed on Oteys.

Response: We believe that a better approach may be to wait to see if parking becomes an issue before placing parking restrictions. We note that while parking issues were anticipated for most of our trails prior to construction we are not aware of any actual issues that have resulted. If problems do occur we could explore no parking or residential parking permit solutions. This is only our initial suggestion, which could be altered at the direction of the Council if the project moves forward to construction.

7. I don't see the need for phase I. Runs along a highway - not attractive. Phase 3 is a more attractive greenway project.

Response: The project is intended to provide a safe and legal point of access to the Merritt's Pasture, Morgan Creek Trail, and the Fan Branch Trail for pedestrians and bicyclists living east of Merritt's Pasture and south of Fordham Boulevard. We agree that this relatively short section would have very little benefit from an aesthetic standpoint. However, we also think that it would provide a very high level of community benefit as the only viable option for a functioning access point to the Morgan Creek/Fan Branch Trail system that does not involve the use of automobile transportation or trespassing. This project is part of a priority corridor in the draft Mobility Plan.

8. I support the project.

Response: Noted

9. Phase 1 should only be built if the neighboring property owners agree to it.

Response: This is not a standard used for most public projects. It would be our goal to address as many of the neighborhood concerns as possible. However, the final decision would likely be made considering a large number of factors, one of which would be preferences of neighbors.

10. Phase 1 should only be built if it reaches Otey's Road

Stop at Morgan Creek Road

Response: We are designing to Oteys Road in anticipation of a future pedestrian crossing of Fordham Boulevard at that location. We believe that in the short term it may be desirable to build only to Morgan Creek Road until such time as the pedestrian crossing is funded.

11. Include plantings "greenway" DUH

Response: The design will include a fully developed landscape plan.

12. Make this the final phase. Too much controversy

Response: Phasing will likely be a Council decision that will take in account a number of issues including benefit to the community, funding, and other issues.

13. Please add street trees to the greenway when it follows Fordham.

Response: We intend to address landscape screening in some form including the possibility of adding trees.

14. A noise wall would serve "thousands" of people (a nice one, not concrete).

Pay for privacy fence along homes (and perhaps sound wall).

We want a 6' wooden wall built between our house and this path to protect our home from the traffic on the path.

If you do build phase 1 along Fordham, please include a significant (15') noise abatement/privacy fence - for visual privacy, noise and DEER incursion onto Fordham

Phase 1 should only be built if substantial funding will be used for fences to alleviate noise and protect privacy.

Privacy Issues: Trail and all the people will be visible from my home, invading my privacy. Needs to be privacy screen (6-foot or higher fence) or vegetation between trail and my property

Impact to green buffer between our property and Fordham. I hope any trees removed will be replaced with some kind of barrier or planting.

Response: We will consider items such as landscape buffers, sound walls, and privacy fences as part of the overall design. It is our intent to provide solutions for any issues created by construction of any future trail. It is important to note that it is not our intention to use greenway bond funds to solve current issues such as already existing levels of highway noise. However, we are more than willing to seek design solutions that would address issues caused by trail construction and possibly help with existing issues if the solutions can be provided at reasonable costs. It appears that topography will likely lead to a mix of design solutions depending on exact location. The next time we hold a meeting we hope to have much more information on this topic.

15. Map of how much vegetation would be removed to build it.

Response: As plans advance we will develop a site plan, grading plan, and demolition plan that will clearly show the limits of construction.

16. Impact to ability to enter and exit our neighborhood safely (without running over pedestrian)

Response: The design will address this issue. NCDOT will also be concerned with this issue and must review and approve the plans.

17. Parking - we already have people parking along our drive to achieve access.

Response: We need to further discuss this issue. Some homes are not in the Town limits or on town streets. This means that the standard town approach of legally restricting parking may not be suitable. We will likely have to explore options suitable for those living in Orange County outside of the town limits.

18. Impact to privacy. We already have field traffic in our back yard and hope that we can maintain the privacy of the front of the house.

Response: We need to further discuss this issue in order to better understand the concern.

19. Share robbery and litter data associated with greenways

Response: In our experience there is very little litter along our greenway trails due to the commendable actions of our citizen users. We will include a plan for litter cans. We are not

aware of any robbery incidents on our trail system. We have asked our Police Department for such data and have been told there is none.

BRIDGE AT ASHE PLACE AND ARBORETUM (PHASE 2)

1. Specify no parking on Ashe Place.

Response: We believe that a better approach may be to wait to see if parking becomes an issue before placing parking restrictions. We note that while parking issues were anticipated for most of our trails prior to construction we are not aware of any actual issues that have resulted. If problems do occur we could explore no parking or residential parking permit solutions. This is only our initial suggestion, which could be altered at the direction of the Council if the bridge project moves forward to construction.

2. Use most complex deterrent at end of bridge. Must dismount from bike and walk bike through.

Response: It is our current thinking to use the most restrictive entrances that still meet minimum standards for access using Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards.

3. Proposal turns streets of Morgan Creek & King Mill into defacto greenway which will increase pedestrian and bike traffic on streets that are not designed for it.

Response: We are not aware of design problems related to use by bicycles on local streets. We are aware of the lack of sidewalks, but also note there is already a high level of pedestrian use. We have also heard that many people currently cross the creek using the OWASA pipes. We acknowledge that pedestrian and bicycle use would likely increase.

4. Strongest concern is the FEMA "No Rise." During hurricanes Matthew 16' and Fran 96' flood waters came to one foot from flooding our home. Any structure that crosses the creek can become a dam. Any backup of water would have flooded our home.

Only be built if there is NO possibility for waters be dammed.

Response: We agree that flooding is a crucial issue related to this project. At this time it is our goal to design a bridge that will obtain a no-rise certification using standard FEMA approved flood models.

5. Phase 2 is an essential link connecting north and south. I need a safe way to cross the creek to walk in the Botanical Garden. My husband needs a safe crossing to get to UNC campus, especially when snow closes the local roads. He has cross with his bike over the pipe, which is

horribly dangerous.

Response: Noted. We agree that one of the main benefits of this project would be to provide a safe alternative to the OWASA sewer pipes.

6. The phase 2 bridge will add to our property values, plus allow us a walking path as we age in place in our home of almost 20 years.

Response: Noted. We have no information on the effect a bridge would have on property values.

7. The folks against the projects have far over-represented the negatives and dominated the meetings.

Response: Noted

8. Very much in favor of the bridge. 10 feet seems a good width. Found arguments that emergency/dive would abuse bridge access ridiculous. ATV could save lives in a real emergency. Also I'm right on Arboretum just up from the proposed bridge and have no privacy concerns.

Response: Noted

9. Connectivity is great for you, and the nosey. We have families who need to be protected. We do not need to open everything to everyone else. We had a teenager who used to cross this pipe to network (in his rebellious days) with his friends who did drugs. He sneaked out, more or less, and snuck out the back way. DRUGS came easier to him because of the access. We have a closed, safe neighborhood. We do not want our homes connected to what is south of us. We want our town to put the protection of its citizens FIRST. We know that if our neighborhood is opened, as your wish, there will be more harmful elements brought to our neighborhood. KEEP our CHILDREN & FAMILIES SAFE. KEEP our NEIGHBORHOOD the GARDEN it is.

Response: Noted

10. The impact of Obey Creek development should be taken into account.

Response: We believe that for planning purposes the main point related to the Obey Creek development is the potential for using a planned cash payment by the developer to build a pedestrian crossing of Fordham Boulevard. We believe that the plans for expansion of the trail are not in conflict with that plan.

11. We need a plan how to get people and bicyclists to town and Oteys.

Response: We believe that the street network is suitable as is for pedestrian and bicycle traffic south of Fordham Boulevard. Eventually, it is our hope that a pedestrian crossing of Fordham Boulevard will be constructed to allow easier access to the downtown and the university. Such connections are proposed in the draft Mobility Plan. However, we also believe that the bridge project does not require that access to the north side of Fordham Boulevard be provided at the same time. We believe that significant benefits would be gained by providing a safe and legal ways for residents to visit neighbors and the Botanical Gardens.

12. The map that was distributed stated "Nearest Public Access to North Side of Creek" This implies that folks can walk along the North side of the creek - not true. This is private property. Erect signs stating that no public access is permitted along the creek. This is not a public trail - similar to the signs at Merritt's Pasture.

Response: We apologize for any confusion. The purpose of the map was to show that it would be impractical to build a trail along the creek. The map shows the long stretch of private properties between Merritt's Pasture and Ashe Place. Each property owner would have to agree to provide an easement. We noted several times during the meeting that we don't think a trail along the creek would be a viable solution.

13. I live directly adjacent to the proposed Morgan Creek Bridge. I have lived there since 1992. I fully support construction of the Morgan Creek Bridge as proposed, 10 feet in width.

Response: Noted

WESTERN EXTENSION TO CARRBORO (PHASE 3)

1. MAKE THIS PHASE 1! True greenway project. Lead with your best section with least controversy! Make "joint venture" with Carrboro & DOT to put in a sidewalk up Greensboro to Main Street

Response: Phasing will likely be a Council decision that will take in account a number of issues including benefit to the community, costs, and other issues. Sidewalk issues outside of the Town limits are beyond the scope of this project.

2. We are hoping to renovate the playground at FPG Elementary School over the next few years (funding is grant-based so the timeline is unknown at this point) and would like to discuss the possibility of a spur off the greenway to the school. I'm not sure about safety and other issues yet, but my company and the PTA would like to be in conversation as plans move forward. I see (from this meeting) that this greenway might be contentious, but I'm excited about it and appreciate you all working to make this happen.

Response: The current design brings the trail very close to the fence near the playground. It was our intent to gather public input at the February 20, 2017 meeting and then begin to meet with individual public owners. We will soon contact the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools to discuss more detailed planning issues.

3. I support the greenway being built! We use the existing trail all the time. Please have the trail stay NORTH of the creek by the school at Smith Level Road **and** as it goes under Smith Level to Carrboro. There are many more homes in the multifamily units in apartments directly south of 54 and north of the creek that would greatly benefit from access. Please build it soon! Thanks for your hard work on making this happen.

Response: Noted

4. I would strongly support a spur trail to Frank Porter Graham Elementary, or at least the current 25% draft that brings the trail within close proximity to the campus.

Response: The current design addresses the issue as you recommend. We will work with school officials to address their concerns and desires.