

# Asheville on Bikes Merrimon NCDOT

## Comments RE: STIP U-5781-U-5782

### Initial Designs

The following public comments were provided to Asheville on Bikes by the respective commentors at the time they were sent to NCDOT. We are publishing with permission of each comment author. This pdf contains only those comments, and is thus a portion of the total comments received by NCDOT. We received 140 comments, 1 in favor, 139 opposed; 95 of the 140 gave us permission to publish here.

Database of comments is here:

<https://ashevilleonbikes.com/merrimon-widening-ncdot-comments-tip-u-5781-u-5782>

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## **Amy: To increase speeds along this road makes no sense to me**

From: **Amy Kemp**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:45 AM

Subject: Widening of Merrimon Avenue

To: [chood@ncdot.gov](mailto:chood@ncdot.gov), [mgclark@ncdot.gov](mailto:mgclark@ncdot.gov)

I am writing as a longtime North Asheville resident and homeowner, and for years have frequented the locations along Merrimon Avenue on a daily basis.

The current proposal to widen Merrimon appears to make it easier for cars to travel faster along this road, while impeding ability to safely access businesses along this corridor. To increase speeds along this road makes no sense to me. People who travel the road and frequent its businesses value a lower speed limit so that they can access businesses safely. I know of no one who wants Merrimon Avenue to have any more lanes than it has, nor do they want cars using this road to travel faster.

Broadway is an underutilized 4-lane road that is capable of handling traffic traveling at a faster rate of speed. I-26 was built in order to accommodate traffic going to Weaverville.

Merrimon Avenue is a business corridor surrounded by apartments and neighborhoods full of residents who use those businesses. Residents living along or near Merrimon Ave deserve safe access to its businesses by any means they choose, whether it be car, bike, or on foot. Traffic

along Merrimon Avenue can be minimized through a Complete Streets approach, as outlined in <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>.

The current plan is discriminatory in that it reduces safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Everyone should have equal, unimpeded access to businesses. That right should not be limited to those who own autos. The government is responsible for the overall safety of all citizens, not just a few. The health and wellbeing of the public is served when people are able to access the outdoors. A road should not restrict a natural means of accessing resources, or shared, community spaces such as parks and greenways.

Any changes to Merrimon Avenue should rightfully be reviewed by those who will be impacted by those changes, i.e. the community at large. I encourage you to engage with neighborhood groups, the City of Asheville, and the public at large before committing to making any changes to Merrimon Avenue, in order to ensure that the interests of everyone are served by the outcome.

All the best,

Amy Kemp

– Amy Kemp, Chestnut Hills January 29, 2018

## **Karen: Let's not replace current problems with others—and spend precious funds doing so**

To: [chood@ncdot.gov](mailto:chood@ncdot.gov), [mgclark@ncdot.gov](mailto:mgclark@ncdot.gov)

As a local resident, I am opposed to the Merrimon Avenue widening plan as it is now proposed for Asheville.

Though it's clear that traffic improvements could be made, I don't believe what is proposed pays sufficient attention to the safety ramifications for both pedestrians and vehicles in this densely populated area.

Let's not replace current problems with others—and spend precious funds doing so.

Sincerely,

Karen Kennedy

– Karen Kennedy January 29, 2018

# Vann: If Merrimon becomes “Hendersonville Road North”, which community connector is next?

Dear Mr. Hood:

I am a resident of North Asheville and regularly use Merrimon Avenue to locally shop, to go to UNC Asheville events, to connect to I-240 and to go downtown. I think everyone agrees that the entire length of Merrimon from Beaver Lake to downtown needs review and improvement. I write to express my concern that the Project identified above does not reflect consideration of community interests and is not the best we can do as we look forward to the Asheville of tomorrow.

The issues with the Proposal are too numerous to fully address in this letter. I present them in bullet form and request that NC DOT extend its period for public comment and meaningfully engage with the City of Asheville, its neighborhoods and its citizens to design a new Merrimon Avenue that serves us all.

I oppose the project for the following reasons:

- Economically unjust, this Project is solely for the benefit of the car driving public, disfavoring those who can't afford cars, can't drive cars due to disabilities or choose not to drive. Although the Proposal contains improved and widened sidewalks, pedestrian traffic will be negatively impacted by a widened thoroughfare more difficult to cross with increased traffic travelling at higher speeds. In addition to a fifth lane, lanes would be widened making difficult crossings even more perilous for all, particularly the elderly and disabled.
- Environmentally unsound as its sole purpose seems to be more cars at higher speeds. The Project addresses moving cars, not people, and ignores the environmental benefits of alternative transportation. It fails to consider the obvious environmental costs of more fossil fuel produced by increased vehicular traffic. The Project fails to consider what Asheville needs in the future, as the inevitable increase in ride sharing and autonomous vehicles will revolutionize surface transportation and make possible more “complete streets” usable by all.
- Failure to consider “Complete Street” alternative proposals that would enhance livability and business viability. Concepts such as a “road diet” (shrinking four to three lanes with expanded bike paths and sidewalks) and design of Merrimon to serve as a “complete street” that brings neighbors together and balances the interests of walkers, bikers, and businesses with those of drivers were not considered.
- Destructive of neighborhood cohesion and small business growth, because the Proposal would reduce Merrimon's use as a “neighborhood connector” in favor of enhancing it as an “arterial” through road like Hendersonville Road in South Asheville. Studies have

shown that slower traffic improves business success while speeding commuters have the opposite effect.

- City and neighborhoods have not had an opportunity to voice what we want our neighborhood to be. Because Merrimon is a state road, DOT has plowed ahead without reasonable notice and an opportunity for voices to be heard. Only one hearing was held on a Monday in the first full week after New Year's. The City was not consulted at all. And the public was given just a three– week comment period. We are all playing catch up and need more time to be heard.
- Design is contrary to City's development plans and recent changes to Merrimon zoning intended to make it more business and people friendly. Asheville requires consideration of greenway access, bike traffic, and bike climbing lanes if changes are made to City roads. The proposal would not do anything to connect the greenway east of Merrimon to the greenway west of Merrimon, thus requiring joggers, bikers and parents pushing baby carriages to cross the road at an unsafe intersection which would be about a third wider.
- Road would be made more unsafe. While proposed changes are intended to make Merrimon safer, the additional width of travel lanes an additional lane of traffic, and roadway design changes would have the perverse effect of making the road more unsafe, with more motorists travelling at higher speeds and with pedestrians and bikers having to traverse wider intersections.
- Newly created bike lanes would be unsafe and not meet four– foot width standard. While the creation of a bike lane would be an improvement, the Project would create two– foot lanes adjacent to two– foot gutters, rather than a four foot lane designed for bike safety. The seam between the two– foot lane and the two foot gutter is unsafe for bikers.
- The design is an unnecessary expenditure of several million dollars. DOT's own statistics show no increase in Merrimon traffic in the last two decades. No statistical data suggesting need to accommodate more cars. Alternative design concepts, including a "road diet" can be explored by using temporary barriers and paint, saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

This is not just a Merrimon/North Asheville, issue. DOT controls many similar roads around Asheville. If Merrimon becomes "Hendersonville Road North", which community connector is next? DOT should delay consideration of the Project; extend the period for public comment; consider input from Asheville's elected officials; and schedule additional meetings in various City neighborhoods in order to hear from the public. Any proposal to modify Merrimon should connect greenways, provide for safe, four– foot bike lanes; enhance bus or other alternative mass transit; and focus on enhancing Merrimon as a neighborhood connector rather than an arterial thru way.

Vann Vogel

– Vann Vogel, Lakeview Park January 29, 2018

# **David: Please maintain the human scale of our neighborhood**

From: **David Novak**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 11:20 AM

Subject: STIP Project #U-5781 and #U-5782

To: kbereis@hntb.com, mgclark@ncdot.gov, chood@ncdot.gov

I am a homeowner and resident on Woodward Ave in Norwood Park. We are a family with 3 children and make use of the nearby neighborhood parks, shops, and services.

In re: STIP Project #U-5781 and #U-5782, road renovations for Merrimon Ave, I am in favor of a 3-lane solution (employing a center turn lane) allowing ample space for bus turn-outs, regulation width bike lanes, and safe, set back, pedestrian sidewalks.

Please maintain the human scale of our neighborhood and enhance our connectivity among homes, businesses and public spaces. Please engineer changes that allow for slower traffic speeds and greater enjoyment of the public corridor by the families in residence, their visitors and customers.

Do not turn our AVENUE into a HIGHWAY.

Sincerely,

David Novak

– David Novak, Norwood Park January 29, 2018

# **Robert: regular customer of the Thai restaurant, The Hop, the Valvoline oil change and Whits Frozen custard**

From: **Robert Allen**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:57 AM

Subject: Comment on Asheville Merrimon Ave TIP Nos. U-5781 and U-5782

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a frequent user of the stretch of Merrimon Avenue being considered under this plan. I am a regular customer of the Thai restaurant, The Hop Ice Cream parlor, the Valvoline oil change and Whits Frozen custard.

So I have quite of bit of experience with the current traffic issues, especially the problems with left turns off Merrimon into businesses and side streets, and the difficulty of making a left turn

out of businesses to get back onto Merrimon. There are real dangers posed to through traffic from these maneuvers.

When I heard NCDOT was planning a left turn lane I was thinking this was a good idea. HOWEVER, the proposed changes to Merrimon Avenue which maintain four lanes of through traffic is a terrible choice. A much better option would be have one lane each direction accommodating all through traffic, add the middle turn lane, then provide plenty of shoulder room to allow cars making right-turns to pull out of the flow of traffic and bus stops. I believe a single unobstructed lane, preferably with timed signals, would allow as much traffic to flow down the road as now, but avoid the jockeying for position and excessive lane changes. It would also provide a buffer zone for pedestrians and room for bike lanes (although I doubt this will ever be a really good bike route because of the inherent amount of traffic it must carry).

In short, I am strongly opposed to the current plan and think no changes should be made until all transportation modes are included in the design and the plans are incorporated into the entirety of Merrimon Avenue north and south of this project.

Respectfully,

-Robert Allen

– Robert Allen January 29, 2018

## **Stephen: I beg that you PLEASE take more time to reconsider your plans**

From: **Stephen Pierson**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:40 AM

Subject: Merrimon Ave. Widening Project, Asheville, NC

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

Hello,

I'm writing as a concerned citizen of Asheville, NC. I have studied the plans for the proposed widening of Merrimon Ave, and to myself and MANY other citizens of Asheville, it not only shows zero consideration for pedestrian and cyclist safety, but also seems to me as though it will serve ineffectively as a safe corridor for automobiles as well. Considering the fast rising cost of living in the area and the lack of jobs outside of the service industry (an industry that does not pay well) many people in the Asheville area cannot even afford an automobile, and are forced to commute by bicycle or foot. Thus, there are mothers, fathers, children, and even grandparents walking and biking these roads, sidewalks, and crosswalks as an absolutely necessary means of transportation. Your plans put all of these people in greater danger as they aim to not only prioritize automobile travel, but aim to INCREASE the speed of travel for these automobiles, on a road that is already incredibly dangerous to pedestrians. I don't know if anyone involved in the planning and design process has ever ridden a bicycle on the road before, but it is absolutely absurd to consider 2' a wide enough space for cyclists to occupy safely on a road that is as crowded, and fast paced as Merrimon Ave. and by widening the roads and allowing for

increased automobile rate of travel, you're putting more walking pedestrians at danger on sidewalks and especially in crosswalks. As someone who has lived in Asheville for 6 years, I understand that Merrimon Ave does in fact need to be overhauled and improved upon, but I beg that you PLEASE take more time to reconsider your plans, taking into account the transportation ideals of Asheville citizens, and considering the aforementioned mothers, fathers, children, and grandparents who have no other option than to commute as cyclists or pedestrians; and design a safer, more pedestrian friendly, Merrimon Ave. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen Pierson

– Stephen Pierson January 29, 2018

## **Joe: Making it unsafe for bicycles and pedestrians so cars can go even faster is not a plan we can support**

From: Joe Ebel

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 12:43 PM

Subject: Asheville Merrimon Ave. Widening Project

To: mgclark@ncdot.gov

Dear Mr. Clark,

I am writing in regards to the Merrimon Ave. street-widening plan. My wife and I live adjacent to Merrimon Avenue near the project area. Please create a plan that is pedestrian and bike friendly.

Merrimon Avenue is unsafe and we know something needs to be done. Making it unsafe for bicycles and pedestrians so cars can go even faster is not a plan we can support. In fact, we would appreciate a reduction in the speed limit on Merrimon Avenue!

Please consider the wishes of those that live in the area affected by the planned widening of Merrimon Avenue and make it pedestrian and bicycle safe.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joe Ebel

– Joe Ebel, North Asheville Community January 29, 2018

## **Cisco Pilates: I have always loved this area BECAUSE Merrimon Avenue is NOT**

# like Hendersonville Road, Tunnel Road, and Patton

From: **Cisco Pilates**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 4:25 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue expansion project

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim

I am writing to oppose the proposed plan for the Merrimon Avenue expansion in Asheville. I am a resident of the Five Points Neighborhood. I live one block from Merrimon Avenue and have lived in this neighborhood for 8 years. I have always loved this area BECAUSE Merrimon Avenue is NOT like Hendersonville Road, Tunnel Road, and Patton Avenue, and I regularly walk or ride my bike around my neighborhood and the surrounding neighborhoods.

I was very sad to hear of the plans to add a turning lane to Merrimon Avenue. I cross Merrimon regularly on my bicycle or on foot. It is dangerous already. A pedestrian was killed not far from where I live as they were crossing Merrimon. Your plan to make the road wider and increase the speed limit is exceedingly more dangerous for cyclists, pedestrians, and cars. I don't even like driving on Merrimon Avenue as it is now, and certainly wouldn't consider riding my bicycle on it at its current state. I have only ever crossed it on my bicycle. Your proposed plan only adds a two foot bicycle lane, at increased speeds of 40 mph. I have ridden my bicycle in conditions like this before and won't ever do it again. It is scary and exceptionally dangerous.

I also love the Greenway and have ridden my bike and walked on it many times over the years. It is a lovely addition to our neighborhood and city. Crossing Merrimon is a challenge, and your plan does not improve that intersection. Additionally, Claxton Elementary, located at Hillside Street and Merrimon, seeing daily traffic of elementary school children crossing Merrimon Avenue. Even with the crossing guard, this is terrifying as it stands. Between people rushing in their cars, texting, talking on their phones, and other distractions, these children are not safe. We need to slow down Merrimon and get more cars onto the highway and less on to Merrimon to improve the safety of this intersection.

Merrimon Avenue needs to be made safer for cyclists, pedestrians, and cars. Increasing the speed limit does the opposite. If people want to get to and from North Asheville faster, there is a highway that runs parallel to Merrimon Avenue. I see no purpose in increasing Merrimon's speed limit.

Making a suitable bike lane and better sidewalks, slowing down the speed limit, and allowing the left lane to become a turning lane will both slow down motorists, keep pedestrians safe, keep businesses open, and get more people on to the highway if they want to travel faster.

I am asking you to please communicate with the City of Asheville's Transportation Department, as several key points from existing COA plans were omitted from the Merrimon expansion proposal. These include: 1) including bike lanes over 2 feet wide (Asheville in Motion page 76), 2) safe bicycle and pedestrian routes as outlined in the Asheville City 2025 plan, 3) Improving



the intersection of Merrimon at WT Weaver Blvd as specified in NCDOT's Community Characteristics Report

And additionally, following NCDOT's Complete Street Policy, NCDOT's Vision Zero Policy, and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials guidelines.

I urge you to take into consideration making these important changes to improve Merrimon Avenue for all of the surrounding residents to keep us safe and happy. Thank you for your time and for considering the needs of the residents of Asheville.

– Cisco Pilates, Five Points January 29, 2018

## **Andy: NCDOT's present proposal runs counter to everything I believe and understand about thoughtful planning**

From: **Andy McKenzie**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 11:50 AM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue Widening Project

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim Bereis,

I am writing you in regard to the NCDOT's initial designs for the proposed widening of Merrimon Ave, project U-5781 and U-5782.

I am the third generation in my family to live in Asheville. My sons are the fourth. While I do not know what my father and grandfather, who lived north of Asheville, thought of Merrimon Avenue in their day I can assure you that NCDOT's present proposal runs counter to everything I believe and understand about thoughtful planning.

As a frequent cyclist, pedestrian, driver and shopper along Merrimon Avenue, I encourage you to partnership with the City of Asheville's Transportation Department. Specifically:

- [Asheville in Motion \(AIM\)](#)
- [Asheville City 2025 Plan](#)
- [NCDOT's Community Characteristics Report, US 25 \(Merrimon Ave\) King Street to Maney Avenue: Operational Improvements City of Asheville, Buncombe County \(CCR\)](#)
- By providing an efficient multi-modal transportation network along Merrimon Avenue, access, mobility, and safety needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities are safely accommodated.

I encourage NCDOT to disregard its current proposal and develop one that incorporates the recommendations specified above and by those outlined by Asheville on Bikes.

Respectfully,

Andrew S. McKenzie

– Andy McKenzie January 29, 2018

# **Kari: Citizens of Asheville have spoken – we want safe, environmentally friendly, public-health-friendly, multi-modal transportation**

From: Kari Richmond

> Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 11:02 AM

> Subject: Comments on Project U-4781 & U-5782, Merrimon Ave. Asheville

> To: kbereis@hntb.com

>

> Dear Kim Bereis,

>

> I am writing to you as a resident of Asheville, a business owner, a wife of a UNCA employee, a mother, and a friend to many who live in the vicinity of UNCA. I am a member of Asheville on Bikes and an advocate for multi-modal transportation. I am submitting the following comments regarding NCDOT's initial designs for the proposed widening of Merrimon Ave, project U-5781 & U-5782.

>

> I have looked at the map/graphic of the proposed changes to Merrimon Avenue. I drive the relevant stretch of road weekly, and my husband drives on it nearly every day. It certainly needs updating and widening, but I am not satisfied with the NCDOT proposed changes.

>

> We do NOT need to make it easier for motor vehicles to drive that stretch of road at a higher speed. It is densely lined with retail businesses, banks, and restaurants that receive high levels of traffic. And the thoroughfare is bounded by densely arranged apartment buildings and homes, which further increases the traffic. Merrimon Avenue may serve as a commuter route for some, but commuters need to resign themselves to a max speed limit of 30 mph, with 20-25 mph being preferable, just to account for safety of pedestrians and cars turning in and out of the parking lots of businesses and residential neighborhoods.

>

> This entire area should be served with motor-traffic-calming measures and infrastructure, while providing protected bike lanes, better sidewalks, and other infrastructure that will support biking, walking, and other non-motor traffic. Supporting multi-modal transportation will make the entire area much safer, quieter, and more pleasant for the residents of the area, UNCA students, faculty, and staff, and motor vehicle traffic.

>

> Most concerning to me is the fact that NCDOT did not appear to take into account the pre-existing planning and policies of the City of Asheville in its current project plans. NCDOT must plan in partnership with the City of Asheville's Transportation department, and follow the planning and guidelines in the Asheville in Motion plan, the Asheville City 2025 Plan, and the NCDOT Community Characteristics Report, and any other pre-existing agreements for communication and cooperation with the City of Asheville. The citizens of Asheville have spoken – we want safe, environmentally friendly, public-health-friendly, multi-modal transportation. Our City leaders have listened and planned and organized... and North Carolina DOT must take these plans and desires into account in its projects!

>

> As you go about widening Merrimon Avenue, I ask that you include wider lanes – at least 14 feet wide if a lane is to be shared with bikes. I strongly prefer a dedicated bicycle lane with physical barriers against motor vehicles. We also must have wider and more frequently placed pedestrian crossings. If the infrastructure is provided, people in this city are desperate to use bicycles and other non-traditional vehicles to commute to school and work. Tourists come here to enjoy the outdoor living aspect of our beautiful city, and they will also enjoy biking and walking to enjoy the many businesses and restaurants in this area of Merrimon Avenue.

>

> Please, work with the plans we already have in place, including:

- > • NCDOT's Complete Street and Vision Zero policies
- > • AASHTO's (American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials) bicycle facilities standards

- > • City of Asheville's (COA) Asheville in Motion (AIM), 2025 Comprehensive Plan, Asheville Greenway Master Plan, and the Community Characteristics Report, Proposed Interchange Project, Tip No. U-4013.1. [1 US 25](#) (Merrimon Ave), King St to Maney Ave: Operational Improvements, City of Asheville, Buncombe County

>

> And please include in your project coordination:

- > • An analysis of pedestrian and bicyclists level of service (LOS)
- > • A continuous connection for the Glen's Creek Greenway at WT Weaver
- > • COA's planning and transportation departments in the development of the redesign
- > • A community working group made up of corridor neighbors and business leaders, active transportation advocates, and city transportation and planning staff to provide input during the re-design of the project
- > • A charrette approach to public input throughout the redesign process.

>

> Thank you for your time. I look forward to biking along Merrimon Avenue with my kids in relative safety in the next couple of years!

>

> Kari Richmond

– Kari Richmond    January 29, 2018

# **Jim: As presented, this project is deeply flawed in multiple respects, and I request that the current proposal be discarded**

Kim Bereis, AICP  
kbereis@hntb.com

Re: Merrimon Ave. Widening, Project U-5781 & U-5782

Dear Ms. Bereis: I am very concerned about NCDOT's proposed widening of Merrimon Avenue. As presented, this project is deeply flawed in multiple respects, and I request that the current proposal be discarded and the process restarted to enable the development of an appropriate project. First and foremost, NCDOT's process for developing its proposal is completely unacceptable. NCDOT's mission is not simply to devise ways to move motor vehicles from place to place as fast as technically possible. Its mission is to provide transportation solutions to serve the public welfare. By failing to consult with the City of Asheville and the affected community, by failing to consider the City's relevant planning documents, and by failing to involve the public in a meaningful way at a meaningful time, NCDOT has utterly failed at its mission. No better evidence of this problem is needed than the fact that Asheville City Council first learned of the proposal from the newspaper. For this reason alone, even if the proposal were substantively perfect, it would be problematic. However, the proposal is far from substantively perfect. In fact, it completely ignores safety considerations, accepted design standards, NCDOT's own Complete Streets policy, and the urban fabric in which Merrimon Avenue sits, all to further the goal of moving many cars fast. The proposed 2-foot "shared bicycle lane" is a prime example of this problem. No existing design standard supports this concept, and it is, on its face, plainly unsafe for both cyclists and motorists. Likewise, the lack of a safe and continuous crossing for the Glenn's Creek Greenway and the restriction of access to Norwood Park (specifically Woodward Ave.) show a failure to consider any needs other than those of through-traffic motor vehicles. There are many other problematic aspects of the proposed design, but these should suffice to show that as currently presented, the project is unacceptable. When redesigning this project, NCDOT should involve the City of Asheville, the corridor community and the public early and in a meaningful way, including full consideration of city planning documents including but not limited to the Asheville in Motion plan, Comprehensive Plan, Greenway Master Plan, and Bicycle Master Plan. Above all, NCDOT must remember that Merrimon Ave. is not simply an artery to quickly move cars from downtown Asheville to Weaverville and points beyond. Indeed, in its current environmental context, it is singularly unsuited for that purpose and no amount of widening will change that. Instead, it is a vital component of the city of Asheville's economic, cultural and recreational fabric. To be successful, any new proposed project must embrace those aspects as fully as it embraces the transportation function. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the proposed widening.

Sincerely, /s/ Jim Grode  
– Jim Grode January 29, 2018

## **Dan: I am appalled at the complete disregard shown to the residents of Asheville by NCDOT**

From: **Dan Fisher**  
Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 11:45 AM  
Subject: Merrimon Ave.  
To: kbereis@hntb.com  
Cc: ashvilleonbikes@gmail.com

I am appalled at the complete disregard shown to the residents of Asheville by NCDOT. While it would be a dereliction of duty to simply not consult stakeholders, the current course of action actively *ignores* existing policies, standards and proposals concerning urban transportation, both locally and State wide.

The current NCDOT plan is a huge step backwards in transportation thinking. Locally (and nationally), plans are being implemented for safe, community scale improvements to infrastructure. A “Bigger is Better” approach has echoes of failed mid century HUD and FHA bulldoze and pave projects which adversely impact many urban areas to this day. Learn from the past and listen to citizens (and professionals).

We want a more connected, livable, accessible city.

***GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT.***

Daniel Fisher  
Asheville

– Daniel Fisher January 29, 2018

## **Rob: I’m writing to express my fervent opposition to the proposed plan for widening Merrimon Avenue**

From: **Rob Winger**  
Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 1:23 PM  
Subject: Comments on the Merrimon Avenue widening project in Asheville  
To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim Bereis:

As an Asheville resident, I'm writing to express my fervent opposition to the proposed plan for widening Merrimon Avenue. The plan appears to only consider, and clearly prioritizes, through traffic for automobiles at the expense of pedestrians, cyclists, residents and business who use or are impacted by that roadway. The proposed changes are not to just a state highway, but a primary corridor through an area with high density residential neighborhoods, a nearby university, and numerous small businesses. Traffic along Merrimon travels through a community whose desires, needs and safety must be carefully considered.

Due to the proximity to UNCA and numerous residences, many of the people on Merrimon are not in cars. The popular Glenn's Creek Greenway crosses Merrimon in the plan zone, further increasing pedestrian and bicycle traffic. However, the proposal only accounts for the flow cars traveling through this congested area, giving them more room to drive faster, yet providing no additional space for bicycles and putting pedestrians at risk to cross a wider road with faster traffic. The plan certainly does not represent "the Department's commitment to collaborate with cities, towns, and communities to ensure pedestrian, bicycle, and transit options are included as an integral part of their total transportation vision". Why did NCDOT not evaluate the service level of the proposal for pedestrians and cyclists in the area and focus only cars? Why were no alternative proposals presented to residents?

Please understand this proposal is not merely changing a highway, but impacting neighborhoods where people and their families live, work and recreate. I understand the frustration of slow traffic, but this proposal reduces the safety of the community so cars can travel marginally faster for a few blocks. The trade-off is just not worth it.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan R. Winger

– Rob Winger, West Asheville Estates    January 29, 2018

## **David: I try to avoid Merrimon Ave because I feel it is not safe for cyclist**

From: **david copley**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:34 PM

Subject: Project U-5781 and U-5782

To: kbereis@hntb.com

I live in Montford and cycle to businesses on Merrimon Ave. I try to avoid Merrimon Ave because I feel it is not safe for cyclist. Car speeds are going to dramatically increase because the design speed chosen will allow a driver to feel safe at speeds higher than 40 mph. During the public meeting NCDOT confirmed that a 40 mph design speed was used. The plans that I saw at the public meeting on January 8th do not meet federal and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines and standards pertaining to active transportation infrastructure

- The proposed 2ft shared bicycle lane on a road with a 40mph design speed does not conform to AASHTO standards.
- AASHTO's Bicycle Facilities Guide (4th Edition) states, "The minimum operating width of 4 ft (1.2 m), sufficient to accommodate forward movement by most bicyclists, is greater than the physical width momentarily occupied by a rider because of natural side-to-side movement that varies with speed, wind, and bicyclist proficiency. Additional operating width may be needed in some situations, such as on steep grades, and the figure does not include shy distances from parallel objects such as railings, tunnel walls, curbs, or parked cars. In some situations where speed differentials between bicyclists and other road users are relatively small, bicyclists may accept smaller shy distances. However this should not be used to justify designs that are narrower than recommended minimums. The operating height of 8.3 ft (2.5 m) can accommodate an adult bicyclist standing upright on the pedals (AASHTO Bicycle Facilities Guide, 4th Edition, Section 3-2).

Please reconsider your plan. I would like to see traffic calming modifications put in place, not changes to increase speed.

Thanks,  
David Copley

– David Copley January 29, 2018

## **CeCe: I am writing to you today to please urge you to NOT WIDEN Merrimon avenue**

From: **Platinum**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 5:25 PM

Subject: Do not widen Merrimon Avenue

To: chood@ncdot.gov

Hello,

I am writing to you today to please urge you to NOT WIDEN Merrimon avenue. Merrimon is already dangerous enough and widening it will not solve the problem. Stop approving large businesses to build on this street and there will be less traffic. Make it more bike and pedestrian friendly and there will be less traffic. Lengthen the stop lights so that more people have a chance to get across, and turn left without being hit by a car.

We need to slow things down, not speed them up.

Thank you,

CeCe Hue

January 29, 2018

# Kit: I oppose the current NCDOT Division proposal

From: **Kit Hayes**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 4:44 PM

Subject: I oppose the current NCDOT Division proposal regarding “Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard.”

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Good afternoon Ms. Bereis,

My name is Kathryn Hayes and I am a resident of Weaverville, NC who works in Asheville, NC. I have reviewed the proposal for “Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard” made at the January 8th meeting and oppose these designs as presented on the following grounds:

A. The proposed 40mph design speed is dangerous for this road. This section of Merrimon is already unsafe at 35mph speeds, and increasing the speed would likely result in more traffic injuries as well as deter pedestrians and bicycle transportation, which we need to encourage more of, not less of.

B. The proposed design ignores and contradicts the NCDOT’s own Complete Streets Policy by not working with the city, not listening to city residents, and by failing to do what is stated in the policy, which is to “collaborate with cities, towns, and communities to ensure pedestrian, bicycle, and transit options are included as an integral part of their total transportation vision. As a partner in the development and realization of their visions, the Department desires to assist localities, through the facilitation of long-range planning, to optimize connectivity, network interdependence, context sensitive options, and multimodal alternatives.”

C. The bike lanes proposed are not bike lanes, they are gutters. A 2-foot width for a bike lane is simply unsafe and unrideable – have you tried riding in a 2-foot space next to traffic? The average width of bicycle handlebars is 44 to 54cm, or 17 to 21 inches.....leaving a 3-inch cushion. Considering that [NC state law requires a 4-foot space](#) when passing a vehicle, this is unlawful and unpractical.

D. Increasing road width to 75 feet would be detrimental to businesses and residents along the corridor. The current plans would likely cause several local businesses in this stretch to close permanently. They can expect months of reduced revenue during construction.

E. Traffic has not increased significantly over the past 10 years despite a booming population – we need to improve Merrimon NOT to encourage more car traffic, but improve it to make the road safer and more usable for all road users: pedestrians, bicyclists, and car drivers.

I strongly encourage NCDOT to revisit these plans and look at safer, more practical alternatives, including a roadway using a “road diet” model that maintains a 61 foot total width, reducing car lanes to one each way plus a turn lane, implementing recommended 5’ width bike lanes and sidewalks and greenway connections, etc. You should work with the City as per your own policy and look at this plan



[http://www.completestreetsnc.org/wp-content/themes/CompleteStreets\\_Custom/pdfs/NCDOT-Complete-Streets-Planning-Design-Guidelines-Appendices.pdf](http://www.completestreetsnc.org/wp-content/themes/CompleteStreets_Custom/pdfs/NCDOT-Complete-Streets-Planning-Design-Guidelines-Appendices.pdf) and this plan <http://www.ashevillenc.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=22784> and this plan <http://www.ashevillenc.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=26521> as guides.

Thank you for reading, and I look forward to seeing some better alternatives that actually help the city's residents and businesses.

Kathryn Hayes

– Kit Hayes January 29, 2018

## **Sarah: I whole heartedly disagree with your plan for Merrimon Avenue in Asheville, NC**

From: **Sarah Neumann Haske**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 9:42 AM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Project, Asheville NC

To: kbereis@hntb.com

I whole heartedly disagree with your plan for Merrimon Avenue in Asheville, NC.

Merrimon avenue is already an extremely dangerous road for pedestrians and cyclists. This project prioritizes speeding cars and not multi-modal transportation.

Have you ever walked down the sidewalk along Merrimon avenue? I suggest you try it out for yourself and see. There is NO buffer between the sidewalk and the already speeding cars that whizz by within inches of your body (not to mention you want to support a design that allows for **faster** speeds). It is terrifying. **Please, take a walk down Merrimon so you fully understand for yourself.**

Any updated plans for Merrimon Avenue should be prioritizing the safety of it's citizens.

Allowing speeding cars down Merrimon does not do that. Go back to your drawing board and come up with a plan that incorporates bike lanes, larger buffers for sidewalks, and prioritizes local neighborhoods and their connectivity. Everyone is a pedestrian at one point or another, let's put a priority on our own safety. We don't want to see another Hendersonville road in our city.

Sincerely,

—

Sarah Neumann Haske MS, RDN, CLT

Women's Health Functional Registered Dietitian

– Sarah Haske January 29, 2018

**Debbie: I would like to be able to bike commute in Asheville in a way that doesn't feel like I'm taking my life into my hands or have to ride miles out of my way just to stay on safer roads**

From: **Debbie Johnson**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 5:46 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Project Input

To: "kberais@hntb.com" <kberais@hntb.com>

Dear Kim Bereis,

I am writing as a resident of North Asheville who has been a bike commuter for over 7 years. I bike to work from North Asheville to CarePartners on Sweeten Creek Rd on a majority of work days. I bike within town to errands on Merrimon Ave., and bike to social gatherings downtown and in West Asheville to avoid the headaches of parking.

I am in total agreement with the letter that Asheville on Bikes has already submitted pertaining to concerns with the current plans for Merrimon Ave. Their letter expresses these concerns much more coherent and succinct manner than I ever could. So in the interest of not reinventing the wheel, I would like to politely add, "ditto."

I would like to, some day, be able to bike commute in Asheville in a way that doesn't feel like I'm taking my life into my hands or have to ride miles out of my way just to stay on safer roads. I would like the rest of Asheville to feel more comfortable biking on these roads because the infrastructure has been put in place to allow them to do so in a safe manner. Please abandon these plans as they currently stand and consider making this the bike/pedestrian-friendly city that it has the potential to be.

Thank you for your consideration,

Debbie Johnson

– Debbie Johnson, North Asheville Community    January 29, 2018

**Amanda: Personally I would love to see a lower speed limit on Merrimon, with more**

# **pedestrian access in the form of both bike lanes and safer sidewalks**

From: **Amanda Lavallee**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 7:23 PM

Subject: Merrimon Widening

To: "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>, "mgclark@ncdot.gov" <mgclark@ncdot.gov>

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my strong opposition to the current NC DOT plan to widen Merrimon Avenue. As a resident of North Asheville, I do not feel as this plan takes the community into account, nor what is best for the businesses and residents. Personally I would love to see a lower speed limit on Merrimon, with more pedestrian access in the form of both bike lanes and safer sidewalks. Let's put in green turn arrows at each light, rather than a fifth lane.

The local nickname for Merrimon is "Scare-imon" and I sincerely do not want to see this get worse. I think about other five lanes through out the city, and not only do I think of people routinely driving over 50 miles an hour down Hendersonville Rd, I also think of horrendous traffic back ups, and places I try to avoid driving. In fact, we bought our house in North Asheville because it still feels like Asheville, rather than a massive and congested highway of strip malls in Anytown USA.

I've had friends who have gotten hit by cars both on foot (while the crosswalk sign was in their favor) and while driving straight down Merrimon. I see young kids walking home with headphones and backpacks from school. I see folks weaving from sidewalk to street on bikes, without a clear and safe route to take. I do not think encouraging more cars at a faster speed limit down Merrimon will be an improvement in any way, not to mention the horrendous mess that will be made during the construction process affecting so many in their daily commutes.

I hope you will take my thoughts into consideration. I know that many of my friends and neighbors agree that we want alternatives to the current and awful plan to widen this road that runs straight through the heart of our North Asheville community.

Thank you for your time,

Amanda Lavallee

– Amanda Lavallee January 29, 2018

**Martha: Walking to nearby businesses is a scary and difficult task but I attempt it. We need a renovation that addresses that problem not make it worse.**

From: **martha skinner**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 8:59 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim Bereis,

I am a professional with a background in architecture and urban planning. I am also a resident of Asheville. I live off of Merrimon Avenue.

I am in opposition to NCDOT's proposed widening of Merrimon Avenue (project U-5781 & U-5782), as currently proposed. It doesn't take into consideration pedestrians, bikes, and the fabric of neighborhoods linked to each other. Your proposal also ignores the recommendations of hard work by the people of this community who have proposed visions that do take into consideration all of the modes of movement that make a city inhabitable and safe.

I drive on Merrimon and I also attempt to walk to businesses near me. I do not ride my bike as I find it unfeasible and deadly at the moment. Walking to nearby businesses is a scary and difficult task but I attempt it. We need a renovation that addresses that problem not make it worse. Widening the street, making car traffic faster while not providing proper spaces for other moving participants is a travesty, extremely dangerous and damaging to community life. I have a personal friend who lost her son who was walking, to a driving car. Today my daughter wanted to walk to a park. I was afraid for her and discouraged her. The safety issue also extends to our health. Car controlled cities dampen the natural physical movement of residents. Our city is fairly small. So many of us could get to work and places by bike and walking and in that process exercise. This is not only healthy to our bodies, it also reduces the amount of cars on our streets, reducing emission gases which in turn also makes our cities safer. Unfortunately walking and riding a bike on Merrimon at the moment is not inviting or safe. In the NCDOT proposal it becomes impossible. Let's instead imagine the safety and health improvement all around if our city was truly accessible to all forms of flow. We can easily change that.

I am thankful that there are community efforts with better proposals and with a thoughtful regard for people living here. Local planning experts and Asheville on Bikes have researched and explored this fully. I ask that their recommendations be incorporated into a redesign for our city that makes improvements not make our city less accessible, less desirable and more dangerous. I oppose the AS IS proposal by the NCDOT and would prefer nothing be done. I ask that this community and our work be engaged on this and let's do something really great. Let's do a project that will not only be safe for us residents but also be inspirational to other of our cities.

Sincerely,

Martha Skinner

– Martha Skinner, North Asheville Community    January 29, 2018

# **Christian: As currently proposed, I oppose the Merrimon Ave widening project**

From: **Christian Kaltreider**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 4:57 PM

Subject: I Oppose Merrimon Ave Widening Project

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>,

Hello,

As currently proposed, I oppose the Merrimon Ave widening project. I agree with the opposition statements made by Asheville on Bikes concerning this project.

Thanks!

Christian Kaltreider

North Asheville / Woodfin Resident

– Christian Kaltreider, North Asheville Community    January 29, 2018

**Matt: Right now, absent alternative plans that incorporate the latest science on car, pedestrian and bike safety, as well as essential greenway planning, there is little to nothing to like about the proposed changes.**

From: **Matt Christie**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 11:41 AM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim Bereis,

My wife and I have been residing and working in Asheville for nearly two decades now. I've spent countless hours on Merrimon Avenue commuting to job sites and homes at all hours of the day and night. I also have two young children, and enjoy biking.

I am deeply concerned that the future of that corridor/"highway" as currently designed is being shortchanged and sacrificed on the altar of short term financial savings, lazy planning and

short-term goals like spreading asphalt and increasing car speed—goals that unfortunately will result in an even more dangerous, unlivable and undesirable stretch of roadway and in the long run much greater expense in terms of both politically unpopular spending and undesirability; and accidents and death.

- Please accept the mutual long-term benefit of developing some alternative plans in cooperation with the existing City of Asheville plans (themselves the result of lots of hard work on the part of the people and professionals who live and govern here).
- Please embrace and follow existing AASHTO guidelines and standards.
- Please honor existing DOT Complete Streets and Vision Zero policies.

I'm glad to break each of these down and spell them out for you in more detail if you'd like, but I suspect you're hearing lots about them already, because we are a city that cares about long-term livability, bike and pedestrian safety and smart, forward-thinking infrastructure. And we're very stubborn and persistent, which is why Asheville is the aspiring healthy, safe and vibrant place it is today.

Compromise is to be expected. I'm sure you and others are under immense competing pressures, not all of which have Asheville residents, pedestrians or multi-modal commuters in mind.

But right now, absent alternative plans that incorporate the latest science on car, pedestrian and bike safety, as well as essential greenway planning, there is little to nothing to like about the proposed changes.

Hope that this evolves and improves very soon.

Respectfully yours,

Matt Christie and Stephanie Hellert  
Asheville, NC

– Matt Christie January 29, 2018

## **Reid: Please reconsider your poor plans... turning it into a Hendersonville Rd or Tunnel Rd clone.**

From: **reid rhodes**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 8:59 PM

Subject: I oppose Merrimon Ave Widening

To: [kbereis@hntb.com](mailto:kbereis@hntb.com)

Kim and NCDOT,

Please reconsider your poor plans on widening Merrimon Avenue and turning it into a Hendersonville Rd or Tunnel Rd clone. The last thing we need in this town are more 4 and 5

lane roads with zero bicycle infrastructure. The list is pretty long on all the reasons that this is a poorly thought out project, but I'll give you a few.

- It is an INCOMPLETE STREET design, NCDOT is supposed to design complete streets that take into account more than automobiles flying through neighborhoods at 40+ mph.
- The "shared bike lane" is a dangerous joke. Please give us a real bike lane in future designs of at least 4 feet in width and NOT shared.
- It will mean long term closures of businesses in North Asheville, some may have to close permanently.
- To the best of my knowledge no public or city gov't input was sought.
- This design will decrease pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Studies show that widening streets only increases congestion.
- Climate change is a present and clear threat. We need to be making it easier for folks to get out of their cars and using multimodal transit that has a lower impact on the environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Reid Rhodes

– Reid Rhodes January 29, 2018

## **Deborah: I actually work at a business on the corner of Merrimon Ave and Chatham**

From: Deborah Bloom

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 5:08 PM

Subject: TIP Projects U5781 & U5782

To: chood@ncdot.gov

Dear Mr. Hood,

I'm writing, with concern, in regard to the plans for changing a section of Merrimon Avenue in Asheville. I've lived and worked in Asheville for over 14 years. I feel that as a (relatively) long-time resident of Asheville, I should have a say in how our streets are maintained and changed as I actually use them on a day-to-day basis.

I believe the plan is to increase the number of lanes and widen them overall. In order to accomplish this, I understand that at least one home is to be obtained by eminent domain. My concerns are for the safety of pedestrians and bikers and for the homeowners who are to lose their home. (To be clear, I do not know which home is to be commandeered, nor do I know the owner.)

If the lanes are widened and the speed limit raised, Merrimon Avenue will become a speedway. Even now, with a lower speed limit, cars drive faster. If the lanes are widened and the speed limit increased, drivers will drive even faster than they do now. I actually work at a business on the corner of Merrimon Ave and Chatham. I can't tell you the number of car accidents that have

occurred. Every time we (the other employees and I) hear tires screeching, we cringe. I myself was the victim (in my car, not as a pedestrian) of a driver who ran a red light on Merrimon. If I hadn't seen the car and sped up to get out of their way, well, I likely would not be writing to you now. They ended up hitting the back end of my car.

As for re-routing cars from Clearview Terrace that exit directly onto Merrimon Avenue, I agree that the safety issues justify it. I'm dismayed though that a family is being forced out of their house to do it. I believe there is an access road of some type that passes close to the Clearview Terrace apartments and lets out on Edgewood Knoll Road. Has this alternate solution been investigated?

One more suggestion is to utilize the greenway that runs along W.T. Weaver Blvd as an underground pedestrian walkway and bike path. Once again, safety and residential usability should be kept at the forefront of this project.

Thank you for your time.

Deborah Bloom

– Deborah Bloom, Kenilworth January 29, 2018

## **John: NO to the Merrimon Ave widening**

From: **Jon Woodward**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 7:46 PM

Subject: NO to the Merrimon Ave widening

To: kbereis@hntb.com

I am opposed to the current plan.

The current proposed design prioritizes the movement of motor vehicles above public safety, multi-modal transportation options, neighborhood connectivity, and local economic development. It is evident that the prioritization of motor vehicles, above all else, is incongruent to the aspirations of the Asheville community when one reviews the existing city plans referenced above. Upon review of NCDOT's plan, it's apparent that NCDOT did little, if anything at all, to incorporate existing city plans or engage COA transportation and planning staff and the corridor community in the development of the current design. Poor process results in poor design and poor design puts people in peril.

The current plan not only ignores city planning efforts, but also fails to meet AASHTO design standards regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities. No existing transportation standard supports the incorporation of a 2 foot 'shared bicycle lane' on a road with a 40 mile per hour design speed (as included in the current proposed plan). The bicycle facilities currently proposed are dangerous and we consider that part of your design to be a flagrant disregard for public safety.

Asheville on Bikes encourages NCDOT to disregard its current proposal and develop a proposal that incorporates the recommendations identified above.



In spite of these significant plan shortcomings, Asheville on Bikes foresees a future where NCDOT Division 13 uses its budget and engineering expertise as a willing partner that promotes Complete Streets and multimodal infrastructure throughout Western North Carolina.

As a step toward a better project and that better future, I request a face to face meeting with NCDOT engineers, design consultants and community members to discuss how to incorporate COA and the corridor community into the Merrimon Ave planning process so that the Merrimon redesign that prioritizes the movement of people above the movement of machines.

Respectfully,

Jon Woodward

– John Woodward, Five Points January 29, 2018

## **Tara: the changes for Merrimon Avenue seem as though they are not taking into account anything other than automobiles as a main transportation**

From: **Tara Oloughlin**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:29 PM

Subject: Merrimon

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim,

I am writing you with my concern about the proposed changes to Merrimon Avenue. I am an avid biker in Asheville and everything that I have read about the changes for Merrimon Avenue seem as though they are not taking into account anything other than automobiles as a main transportation.

I have ridden this section of road as it is now and I find it a troublesome stretch of road. I have done so out of necessity, and the entire time that I am riding it, I question my safety.

As it looks at the moment, the changes would make this stretch of road very similar to Hendersonville Road. I believe we both can safely say that if we told a friend that we were going to bike from downtown to Carolina Cinema to see a movie, those dear to us would urge us not to put our lives at risk and find an alternative way to get to the theater, due to the danger that road would pose to a bicyclist.

I am saddened to think, yet another road would be off limits to a whole form of transportation-bicycling. I urge you to reconsider this proposed change and keep in mind not only cyclists but the community and businesses as a whole.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tara O'Loughlin

– Tara O'Loughlin January 29, 2018

## **Bridget: Last summer my children were almost hit by a car turning from Weaver onto Merrimon (heading north)**

From: **Bridget Felix**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 6:09 PM

Subject: Merrimon Expansion – Let's Start Over!

To: [kbereis@hntb.com](mailto:kbereis@hntb.com), [chood@ncdot.gov](mailto:chood@ncdot.gov), [mgclark@ncdot.gov](mailto:mgclark@ncdot.gov)

Dear Ms. Kim Bereis, Mr. Cole Hood, & Mr. Mike Clark,

I previously wrote to you on January 10th about my concerns with how the Merrimon Ave expansion would negatively impact the Clearview Ter neighborhood where my family and I live. I offered what we as a community agree would be the best option: to connect an already existing partial road to Edgewood Knoll.

My concerns about the Merrimon Ave expansion project go far beyond just my home on Clearview Ter. Although this is a state road, it is very much a neighborhood road, filled with businesses, schools, grocery stores, etc. After speaking to many people in our community, there is strong support and a collective push to make Merrimon Ave a Complete Street where we can walk and ride our bikes safely. I have two boys, 6 & 8, and we often walk on Merrimon Ave from Clearview Ter to the intersection of W.T. Weaver Blvd to go to Weaver park or Luella's. Walking on Merrimon and crossing at this intersection is an extremely stressful experience. Last summer, my children were almost hit by a car turning from Weaver onto Merrimon (heading north). Not only is crossing this many lanes of traffic unsafe and far from ideal for a neighborhood road, there is absolutely no barrier between the speeding cars and the narrow and crumbling sidewalks on Merrimon. It is an unnerving and often terrifying experience, no matter how often we do it. This must improve, not become more dangerous. Widening is not the answer.

Beyond the issue of safety, I can guarantee that many of the errands I run on Merrimon Ave would be done on foot or bike if I felt safe to do so. We do not need another Hendersonville Rd, or New Leicester Hwy. We need a neighborhood road where the thousands of residents in this area can safely walk or ride their bikes. Not only would this have health benefits, but it would also significantly cut down on traffic. Let's take some polls. How many students at Claxton don't walk to school just because they would have to walk on, or cross Merrimon Ave? We could ask the same question about Jones. Or people running errands.

Although there may be commuters who use this road, there are alternatives. I-26 and Broadway are nearby and move much faster than Merrimon Ave ever does. What we need, is to create roadways that encourage less car use. We do not want to encourage urban sprawl or the car

cultures that cities like Phoenix and L.A. have created. Turning Merrimon Ave into a Complete Street would also have a positive impact on local businesses that line Merrimon Ave. People would actually have the ability to walk by a store and pop their head in as opposed to driving by at 35 mph.

Why not test this? From my understanding, it would not cost a lot of money to do a test on Merrimon Ave by painting different lanes. Please consider doing a test from the southern-most point on Merrimon Ave all the way up to the Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary. The test could have a center turning lane, one lane of travel in each direction, and generous bike lanes of 4' in width, not including gutters. If we were given 3-4 months to test this, we would all have a better feel for what the best way to move forward is, especially before we go spend millions of dollars on a project that could cause more fatalities to local residents.

We need to be forward thinking about this. The current plans that were presented are antiquated, irresponsible, and dangerous. Please listen to the people. We live here, we love it here, and we don't want to put ourselves or our children in further danger because of a neighborhood road that is treated like a high-speed highway.

Sincerely,

Bridget Felix

– Bridget Felix, North Asheville Community January 29, 2018

## **Chris: We're going to need a plan that is pedestrian sensitive and suited to a large urban area**

From: **Chris Skoczynski**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 4:00 PM

Subject: merrimon widening plan

To: choood@ncdot.gov, Michele Azan <michele.azan@gmail.com>

We're going to need a plan that is pedestrian sensitive and suited to a large urban area.

Current plans do not meet this criteria.

Thank you.

Chris Skoczynski

Montford resident

– Chris Skoczynski, Historic Montford January 29, 2018

## **Stephanie: I live off of Merrimon Ave...after reviewing the proposed**

# changes, I do not support this widening project

From: **Stephanie Mergelsberg**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:30 PM

Subject: No to Asheville City Merrimon Avenue Widening

To: "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>, "mgclark@ncdot.gov" <mgclark@ncdot.gov>

I live off of Merrimon Ave, just south of the the proposed widening. Merrimon does need attention, as does much of Asheville's infrastructure.

However, after reviewing the proposed changes, I do not support this widening project. It seems to be in favor of motor vehicle transportation, with no regard to improving pedestrians and biker friendliness.

Please consider the various City of Asheville plans, like Asheville in Motion and the Asheville City 2025 Plan. I would like to see some alternative proposals.

Thank you,

Stephanie Mergelsberg

– Stephanie Mergelsberg, North Asheville Community January 29, 2018

# Jen: resident of the Beaverdam area of Asheville, and employee of UNC Asheville, I am opposed to the current Merrimon Avenue widening plans

From: **Jennifer Rhode Ward**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 3:54 PM

Subject: widening Merrimon Avenue in Asheville

To: chood@ncdot.gov, mgclark@ncdot.gov

As a resident of the Beaverdam area of Asheville, and employee of UNC Asheville, I am *opposed* to the current Merrimon Avenue widening plans.

I hope that a plan to reduce vehicle speeds, and to increase pedestrian / bike safety, will be implemented instead.

Thank you,

Jen Rhode Ward

– Jen Rhode Ward, North Asheville Community January 29, 2018

# **Louise: This plan is completely out of step with what most people who live in the neighborhoods surrounding Merrimon Ave want to see their local street look like**

From: **Louise Anderson**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 4:53 PM

Subject: Comment on Merrimon Ave. widening proposal

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to state my opposition to the plan to widen Merrimon Avenue in Asheville for several blocks. I live on Norwood Avenue, just east of Merrimon.

This plan is completely out of step with what most people who live in the neighborhoods surrounding Merrimon Ave. want to see their local street look like – and how they want it to be.

To be able to speed through a stretch of several blocks doesn't serve either people who use the road or neighborhoods. In addition, I find it a gross waste of taxpayer money to put forward a completed plan without having asked for any input first from the city or residents.

Sincerely,

Louise Anderson

– Louise Anderson, Norwood Park    January 29, 2018

# **Jen: I am opposed to the current plan**

From: **Jennifer Woodward**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 11:15 PM

Subject: NO to Merrimon Avenue Widening Project

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim,

I am opposed to the current plan.

The current proposed design prioritizes the movement of motor vehicles above public safety, multi-modal transportation options, neighborhood connectivity, and local economic development. It is evident that the prioritization of motor vehicles, above all else, is incongruent to the aspirations of the Asheville community when one reviews the existing city plans referenced above. Upon review of NCDOT's plan, it's apparent that NCDOT did little, if anything at all, to incorporate existing city plans or engage COA transportation and planning staff and the

corridor community in the development of the current design. Poor process results in poor design and poor design puts people in peril.

The current plan not only ignores city planning efforts, but also fails to meet AASHTO design standards regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities. No existing transportation standard supports the incorporation of a 2 foot 'shared bicycle lane' on a road with a 40 mile per hour design speed (as included in the current proposed plan). The bicycle facilities currently proposed are dangerous and we consider that part of your design to be a flagrant disregard for public safety.

Asheville on Bikes encourages NCDOT to disregard its current proposal and develop a proposal that incorporates the recommendations identified above.

In spite of these significant plan shortcomings, Asheville on Bikes foresees a future where NCDOT Division 13 uses its budget and engineering expertise as a willing partner that promotes Complete Streets and multimodal infrastructure throughout Western North Carolina.

As a step toward a better project and that better future, I request a face to face meeting with NCDOT engineers, design consultants and community members to discuss how to incorporate COA and the corridor community into the Merrimon Ave planning process so that the Merrimon redesign that prioritizes the movement of people above the movement of machines.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Woodward

Five Points Neighborhood President, 2016-2017

– Jen Woodward, Five Points January 29, 2018

## **Connect Buncombe: This proposal does nothing to improve the connection of Glenn's Creek Greenway**

January 29, 2018

Mr. Mike Clark

NCDOT Division 13

55 Orange Street

Asheville, NC 28801

mgclark@ncdot.gov

Re: Merrimon Avenue Project #5782-US 25 Merrimon AV and W.T. Weaver Blvd

Dear Mr. Clark:

Connect Buncombe exists to advocate for the implementation of [Buncombe County's Master Plan for Greenways and Trails](#), a trail system that meets the needs for safe routes for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Recently NCDOT has publicly released a proposal for Project #5782 that includes modifications to the intersection of US 25 Merrimon AV and W.T. Weaver Blvd. This proposal does nothing to

improve the connection of Glenn's Creek Greenway east of Merrimon to the greenway west of Merrimon. As presented the proposal requires pedestrians and bicyclists to cross a road that would be about a third wider with higher vehicular movements and speeds without meeting stipulated design guidelines. We ask that you study this intersection better and present an improved design.

The City of Asheville (COA) has indicated their opposition to the proposal as submitted. Connect Buncombe supports the City Council's concerns. We ask that NCDOT Division 13 incorporate state and local design guidelines for the Merrimon AV (and all future Buncombe County) street improvements. NCDOT should plan these street modifications in partnership with the City of Asheville's Transportation Department and incorporate the following:

**[NCDOT's 2009 Complete Streets policy states:](#)**

- "The North Carolina Department of Transportation, in its role as stewards over the transportation infrastructure, is committed to: ...working in partnership with local government agencies, interest groups, and the public to plan, fund, design, construct, and manage complete street networks that sustain mobility while accommodating walking, biking, and transit opportunities safely."
- "Providing an efficient multi-modal transportation network in North Carolina such that the access, mobility, and safety needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities are safely accommodated."

**[AASHTO Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Facilities:](#)**

- Adopted via NCDOT's own Bicycle Policy as the accepted guidance. NCDOT's Bicycle Policy states: "All bicycle transportation facilities approved by the Board of Transportation shall conform with the adopted "Design Guidelines for Bicycle Facilities" on state-funded projects."

**[NCDOT's Community Characteristics Report, US 25 \(Merrimon Ave\) King Street to Maney Avenue: Operational Improvements City of Asheville, Buncombe County](#)** (CCR), originally developed in 2009:

- The report includes several recommendations, including the notation of a need for specialized trail crossings at W.T. Weaver Blvd to facilitate multi-use path. (p.11)

**[Asheville in Motion](#)**

- Merrimon Ave is recognized in the Bicycle Framework Plan as a route "that serve(s) as a support system for primary routes." (Asheville in Motion Plan, p.76)

**[Asheville City 2025 Plan](#)**

- The need for a bicycle and pedestrian network is identified in the 2025 plan's Transportation Vision. It states, "Vision: The City of Asheville will have a network of bicycle and pedestrian routes which are safe and provide reasonable transportation choice for its residents as outlined in the Asheville Greenway Master Plan and the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan." Buncombe County's Master Plan for Greenways and Trails incorporates COA plans that develop a county-wide bike and pedestrian transportation system.

Connect Buncombe requests that NCDOT delay consideration of the Project; that the comment period be extended; that NCDOT consider input from Asheville elected officials; and that NCDOT host neighborhood meetings in order to hear from the public. We request alternatives to

the Project that would fulfill connections of our existing greenways, and provide for the safety needs of all street users...automotive, transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

Respectfully,

Robbie Sweetser, President Connect Buncombe

Friends of Connect Buncombe, Inc.

P.O. Box 16100

Asheville, NC 28816

– Connect Buncombe January 29, 2018

## **Sarah: I'm writing to voice my opposition to your proposed improvements to Merrimon Avenue**

From: **Sarah Fraser**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 3:21 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue Widening Projects U-5781 and U-5782

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear NC DOT:

I'm writing to voice my opposition to your proposed improvements to Merrimon Avenue in Asheville (Project U-5781 and U-5782). I've lived in Asheville for 13 years and travel this section of Merrimon Avenue at least weekly. In my experience the traffic on Merrimon in this area has not changed noticeably and I don't believe the volume of traffic necessitates a center turn lane or any widening or straightening of the lanes. Furthermore, these types of changes to the roadway will increase traffic speeds resulting in more accidents and increased danger to pedestrians and cyclists. If you must use your funds and engineering expertise to alter this roadway, please make sure the design:

- Incorporates the NC DOT's Complete Street policy
- Meets industry bicycle facility standards
- Incorporates the City of Asheville's 2025 Comprehensive Asheville In Motion (AIM) plan and the Greenways Master Plan
- Provides connection to the Glen's Creek Greenway at WT Weaver Boulevard
- Involves the local residents, businesses, commuters and community in the planning and design process

Sincerely,

Sarah Fraser

– Sarah Fraser January 29, 2018



# **Alyson: I'm a resident of NC who often visits Asheville, and I oppose the widening of Merrimon Ave**

From: **Alyson West**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 7:27 AM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard

To: [kbereis@hntb.com](mailto:kbereis@hntb.com)

I'm a resident of NC who often visits Asheville, and I oppose the widening of Merrimon Ave this [website](#) lays out the many reasons why

best

Alyson West

– Alyson West January 29, 2018

# **Caroline: Asheville is a great place to live – make better not faster**

From: **Caroline Allured**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 4:00 PM

Subject: Make Asheville safer for bikes and people

To: [chood@ncdot.gov](mailto:chood@ncdot.gov)

To city folks-

As you make a plan for Merrimon Ave. please remember we the people (who vote) work her, ride here, walk her shop, raise kids etc...

Asheville is a great place to live – make better not faster.

Caroline Allured

– Carolina Allured January 29, 2018

# **Alex: I think NC DOT's proposed plan for Merrimon Avenue in Asheville isn't a good plan.**

From: **Alex Deckard**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 2:33 PM

Subject: Don't Clone Bad Roads

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Hi Kim,

My name is Alex and I live and work in Asheville. I think NC DOT's proposed plan for Merrimon Avenue in Asheville isn't a good plan.

I worry if Merrimon is redesigned to allow faster cars more pedestrians will get hurt or even die. I'd love to see Asheville become a pedestrian-friendly city. I think its better for people, better for the city, better for cars.

Alex

– Alex Deckard January 29, 2018

# **Emily: I am writing to echo the sentiments of so many other Asheville residents who do not support the current plan**

From: **Emily Muscarella**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 3:55 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave, Asheville. YOU CAN DO BETTER

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Kim,

I am writing to echo the sentiments of so many other Asheville residents who do not support the current plan for changing the Merrimon Ave corridor.

We are a community that values active transportation and SAFETY on our roadways. Increasing the speed and adding a turning lane does not move us toward our goals, but further away. The current plan does not include adequate infrastructure for pedestrians or cyclists or anyone who is not able bodied to move safely.

I am continually disappointed by NCDOT division 13's performance and lack of collaboration with Asheville's elected city officials, staff and residents with regard to the roads that we use everyday. In this particular instance, the fact that NCDOT has ignored its own Complete Streets

guidelines as well as the City of Asheville Bicycle Comprehensive plan, that there was no alternate plans presented, no collaboration with city officials or neighborhoods nor does the design adhere to federal design standards (AASHTO) makes this plan particularly disgusting. We want safe roads with the focus on moving all people, all modes! I strongly encourage you to listen to the voice of the Asheville community and go back to the drawing board on the Merrimon Ave re-design, and invite input from the people who have the most at stake, who's neighborhoods and safety you so profoundly impact with your decisions.

Sincerely,

Emily Muscarella

Asheville resident

– Emily Muscarella, West Asheville Estates January 29, 2018

## **April: Proposed design does not incorporate active transportation standards and best practices for safety**

From: April Brown

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:41 PM

Subject: NCDOT Merrimon Widening Project Asheville

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim,

I am writing regarding the NCDOT Merrimon Avenue Widening Projects U-5781, U-5782 Initial Designs. The proposed designs must be re-evaluated given several issues with the initial designs. I urge NCDOT's Division 13 to partner with the City of Asheville's (COA) Transportation Department and incorporate existing COA plans into NCDOT planning. Several existing COA plans were not incorporated into NCDOT's proposed Merrimon improvements (e.g. Asheville in Motion, Asheville City 2025 Plan, etc).

Additionally, the proposed design does not incorporate active transportation standards and best practices for safety. Please see the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines and standards pertaining to active transportation infrastructure. I urge you to work with active transportation content experts, such as Asheville on Bikes, to incorporate best practices and that prioritizes public safety.

Thank you,

April Brown

– April Brown January 29, 2018

# **Initial Designs...have disregarded the opinions of business owners, our local government, and our community**

From: **Katie Murray**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 9:51 PM

Subject: NCDOT: Merrimon Avenue Widening Projects U-5781, U-5782 Initial Designs

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim Bereis,

I'm writing to publicly comment of my disagreement with the Merrimon Avenue Widening Project you all are proposing. While I see why work needs to be done on Merrimon, I feel that you have disregarded the opinions of business owners, our local government, and our community as a whole.

I have lived and worked in Asheville for over 14 years. I was a student at UNC-Asheville, and I understand the congestion that can happen on Merrimon; however, this is also a place where students, school children, and locals like to walk and bike. By widening the lanes and adding a turning lane you are encouraging faster speeds on an already uncomfortable region of road. I live off of Fairview Rd. where two children were killed by simply trying to cross a road, and you're trying to clone this dangerous design for Merrimon. The design is not safe and it takes away from what makes Asheville so unique, community.

There are plenty of other options for designs. I think you all need to go back to the drawing board and consider the voice of Asheville as a whole before moving forward.

Sincerely,

Katie Murray

Concerned Asheville Resident

– Katie Murray    January 29, 2018

# **Amelia: Faster driving speeds will make Merrimon more dangerous and less pleasant for all users, whether they are walking, biking, or driving**

From: **Amelia Nutter**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 4:11 PM

Subject: Proposed Road Widening of Merrimon Ave, Asheville

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Ms. Bereis,

As an Asheville resident, I feel that the proposed changes to Merrimon Ave are inappropriate. Faster driving speeds will make Merrimon more dangerous and less pleasant for all users, whether they are walking, biking, or driving. My father walks on Merrimon on a regular basis, for exercise and to run errands. Please keep the road safe for him and other users!

Widening the road is not good for local business and will make the street less attractive. The current proposal will likely force local business to close. Local businesses are great for our economy and our community. I would hate for business owners to close their stores so that cars can drive a little faster.

Please follow NCDOT and federal design standards and work with the City of Asheville to make changes to Merrimon Ave while following the Complete Street policy. It is important to me, as a citizen of Asheville, to know that our streets are designed to benefit all users and to beautify our city.

Thank you for your time,

Amelia Nutter

– Amelia Nutter January 29, 2018

## **Clark: Driver yelled, “Get off the road you f—ing b—ch”**

Dear Mike Clark, NCDOT,

I am opposed to the initial designs that you presented on January 8th for the Merrimon project. I would like you to have more public comment time and meet with neighbors and the City of Asheville in order to design a “complete street.” I want you to build a design whose main goal is connecting neighborhood residents to the businesses on the corridor – a design that treats walking and biking as equally valuable, perhaps more valuable, compared to car trips.

My wife and I regularly bike with our children and several months ago my wife arrived home in tears with my daughter in tow. She had been biking near downtown on South Charlotte Street (also an NCDOT road) and, even though she was safely in her lane traveling downhill at a reasonable speed, the only other vehicle on the road (car) pulled close alongside her and the driver yelled, “Get off the road you f—ng b—ch.”

Have you ever tried to explain to an innocent 5 year old girl what a “f—g b—ch” is? South Charlotte St is a 5 lane road much like your initial Merrimon design, and much like your initial Merrimon design, families have no choice but to use it when going between certain destinations, like the baseball stadium or White Labs or the South Slope. Posted speed is 45mph! When a road is only designed for cars, I think it makes our drivers, myself included, behave poorly towards other road users like walkers and bikers. Based on our experiences, the 2 foot bike lane you have drawn up for North Merrimon is a non-starter and you are asking us to put our

lives at risk in order to attempt to use a bike lane that is too narrow and offers no protection from high speed cars.

We desperately want to safely bike to the Brew and View in North Asheville at 675 Merrimon Ave, from the area of Coleman and WT Weaver. We also want to extend our current family biking adventures to include Luella's (501 Merrimon Ave) after visiting the Asheville Botanic Garden near UNCA. We need some type of continuous Greenway connection across Merrimon at WT Weaver. That intersection is unsafe both now and in your design, because you are not accounting for families like ours that are trying to walk and bike more. When we cross the street we look like this: 1 adult on a big heavy bike with two kids; a second adult on their own bike, with the adults taking time to dismount and walk. Dismounting is inconvenient (but the only safe-ish way we can see to get across) and the light frequently sends turning cars right into our group as we try to get across before the walk signal expires. We would also like to be able to ride our bikes easily to the Toy Box at 793 Merrimon after going to the WT Weaver park – we've never been able to do this because of obvious safety problems for bicycle riders along this corridor.

Please change course and listen what the City of Asheville and groups like Asheville on Bikes are saying about this corridor. Asheville on Bikes has published their comment and <https://ashevilleonbikes.com/asheville-on-bikes-official-merrimon-widening-comment-u-5781-u-5782>. I agree with everything they are saying. There is significant latent demand in North Asheville for walking and cycling. This road is a key link to help North Asheville residents become more active and safely reach the businesses along their neighborhood corridor.

Sincerely,  
Clark Mackey

– Clark Mackey, Chestnut Hills January 28, 2018

## **Bill: I'm writing in strong opposition to the NCDOT Merrimon Ave. widening plan as it currently exists**

From: **Bill Helfrich**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 10:15 PM

Subject: Yolo Frozen Yogurt Opposition to NCDOT Merrimon Ave Widening Plan

Dear Mr. Clark,

I'm writing in strong opposition to the NCDOT Merrimon Ave. widening plan as it currently exists. I live on Lakeshore Dr., less than 100 yards from Merrimon. My wife and I also own Yolo Frozen Yogurt at [505 Merrimon Ave.](#)

I've been in the Yolo/Luella's parking area and the Yolo front yard along Merrimon everyday for last 18 months so I'm intimately familiar with the pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile traffic there

and on Murdock Ave. This is currently one of the most family and bicycle friendly places all along Merrimon. Luella's, as you may know, even puts out hoola hoops and cornhole every day. People relax on the Yolo patio in the warmer months and cyclists meet up in our parking lot for a ride on Saturdays.

The current NCDOT plan is hostile to this "neighborly" environment.

It should also be noted that creating a right turn only exit onto Merrimon from Murdock will tempt drivers to cut through the remaining Yolo parking lot in an attempt to turn left and head north to UNCA or towards downtown, thereby endangering pedestrians and oncoming traffic.

Additionally, creating a southbound turning lane onto Weaver Blvd. will tempt other southbound drivers to view the easternmost lanes as the "express" lanes and they will increase their speed through what will be the former front yard of Yolo. This is a yard where kids and cyclists now park their bikes on our permanent bike racks and where kids play during the summer.

I urge you to reevaluate the plan and make it more in line with the concept of Complete Streets which the State of North Carolina and the City of Asheville and its citizens have embraced.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Bill Helfrich

Owner, Yolo Frozen Yogurt

– Bill Helfrich, Grace January 28, 2018

## **Jeremy: From my house, I have to navigate through neighborhood streets looking for a safe place to cross Merrimon**

From: **Jeremy Poore**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 8:49 AM

Subject: Asheville Road Project: Merrimon Avenue

To: chood@ncdot.gov

Hello, please consider making Merrimon a 'complete street' with room for cyclists and proper sidewalks.

This road is currently scary and dangerous. I live about 2 blocks from Merrimon in the Grace neighborhood. From my house, I have to navigate through neighborhood streets looking for a safe place to cross Merrimon. Even with a traffic light, I don't feel safe as many people are driving so fast, that they miss light changes and run the red light.

Perhaps the most dangerous behavior is the last-minute swerve that drivers do when someone stops to turn left in the inner lane. This knee-jerk reaction causes them to turn at speed intoFrom my house, I have to navigate through neighborhood streets looking for a safe place to cross Merrimon a lane they can't fully see while trying to look backwards and avoid hitting a car approaching from behind. What happens to the cyclist riding just ahead of the stopped car?

Also, I was walking home from work downtown last week and discovered a section of sidewalk that is simply missing for 300 yds (by WT Weaver). This meant I had to cross the road (no crosswalk) and then cross back again a half mile later. Who is this road designed for?

Please consider making this road safe for bicyclists and pedestrians while increasing potential customer traffic to shops so that more businesses can thrive here. We need a 'Complete Street'.

Thanks for your consideration,

Jeremy Poore

Grace Neighborhood

Asheville, NC

– Jeremy Poore, Grace January 28, 2018

## **Debra: Walkability is WHY we settled here and to lose points to this widening plan when we could be GAINING them, is crazy**

From: **Debra Frasier**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 2:21 PM

Subject: Merrimon Widening! Wait a minute!

To: chood@ncdot.gov, mgclark@ncdot.gov

Dear NCDOT decision makers,

I am delighted to hear that you are considering upgrades to [Merrimon, SR 25](#). But I am very concerned to see a plan that might be suitable for a suburban non-pedestrian area suddenly dropped down into the middle of a highly trafficked bike and pedestrian urban street! I saw pictures of other intersections in Asheville already using this same plan and was shocked that our urban setting was not taken into consideration. I KNOW we can do better than this!

Let's slow down the process here, take input from the community, and build something anyone would be proud to live next to—as I do, on Fenner, just off the proposed work zone. Walkability is WHY we settled here and to lose points to this widening plan when we could be GAINING them, is crazy. I have seen several of the COMPLETE STREETS success stories that take a similar situation to ours here on Merrimon, and slow traffic down, while keeping movement constant, all while increasing pedestrian access, along with bike traffic...and economic impact scores increase! Let's not take a Tunnel Road solution and stick it on to a very different situation! Use your own brilliant COMPLETE STREET guidelines to guide us here?

The Weaver/Merrimon intersection will only GROW in pedestrian traffic as UNCA grows in stature. The Greenway—that will one day be the jewel of this city's future planning in connectivity—needs your vision to CONNECT, not to block, this visionary fluid people-mover. Together we have an opportunity to transform this dangerous street into something beautiful, befitting it's central role in such a vibrant, people-rich, urban center.

Let's do that together. Stop. Listen. Vision. Then we go!



Sincerely,

Debra Frasier

– Debra Frasier, North Asheville Community January 28, 2018

## **Susan: I bike, walk, and drive on Merrimon Ave. weekly. I attend Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church and live nearby**

To Mr. Hood of the NCDOT and to others involved in the decision-making about the expansion of Merrimon Avenue to five lanes:

I bike, walk, and drive on Merrimon Ave. weekly. I attend Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church and live nearby and do much business on Merrimon. I have just learned in the last 5 days of NCDOT's plans to expand Merrimon to five lanes from before Weaver Blvd. north until around Edgewood. This proposal seems to have been very rushed with almost no input from the neighborhoods, the businesses, the taskforces working on greenways/bikeways, and the City of Asheville.

A three week comment period is NOT adequate to get community input and buy-in. As a conscientious and engaged citizen and neighbor I feel really ignored and left out of this process. This particular proposal for Merrimon Avenue is not a good use of my tax money.

Admittedly, Merrimon Ave. is not currently bike- or pedestrian-friendly, but your plan, TIP nos. U-5781 and U-5782, makes Merrimon Ave. worse and more dangerous. It is disastrous for many businesses along Merrimon. In planning such an expensive change to Merrimon it is essential to get input from these businesses, not to mention City Planners. The actual construction will be long and will cause terrible traffic problems along Merrimon for citizens, businesses, and the city. Some businesses have said that they might be forced to close as a result.

Your plan for bikes is dangerous – only a 2 foot bike-lane and 2 feet for gutters? That is illegal. There will be more accidents and deaths. Your plan also does not make allowance for where the electric and phone lines and poles will be. In your plan there is no allowance for trees.

I request that you:

Delay this decision to expand Merrimon Avenue to five lanes,

Expand the comment period,

Hold well-publicized, public, community meetings,

Consider alternatives to this five-lane expansion – there are good and green alternatives!

Get input from Merrimon businesses, neighborhoods, City Council, and people working on Greenways and Bikeways.

I look forward to your response to this large community outcry about your hasty proposal for a five-lane expansion of Merrimon Ave.

Sincerely,

Susan Presson                      28 January 2018  
– Susan Presson, Grace    January 28, 2018

## **Courtney: Please consider rethinking this plan in favor of something more pedestrian and bike friendly.**

From: **Courtney Fincher**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 5:47 PM

Subject: Widening Merrimon

To: choood@ncdot.gov, mgclark@ncdot.gov

Please consider rethinking this plan in favor of something more pedestrian and bike friendly.

Thank you,

Courtney Fincher

– Courtney Fincher    January 28, 2018

## **Michael: The NCDOT proposal should be dropped**

From: **Michael Cleveland**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 9:59 PM

Subject: STIP Projects U5781 and 5782

To: kbereis@hntb.com, mgclark@ncdot.gov, choood@ncdot.gov

This email is to voice my opposition to NCDOT's proposal to add a continuous turn lane on Merrimon Avenue from W.T. Weaver to Gracelyn. As a North Asheville resident, I drive Merrimon almost daily and at a variety of different times. While a left turn lane at W.T. Weaver would be helpful, there is simply not the sort of congestion on Merrimon that would call for implementation of NCDOT's proposal, witness the fact that traffic volumes have not increased from what they were years ago. The proposal would turn the street into a high speed roadway and would be inimical to the numerous businesses on the street and jeopardize the safety of drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Further, the rushed implementation of the proposal with little public notice and without compliance with NCDOT's own regulations frankly causes me concern that the proposal is designed to benefit a particular special interest and not the users of Merrimon Avenue or the residents of North Asheville. The NCDOT proposal should be dropped.

Michael G. Cleveland

– Michael Cleveland, Grove Park/Sunset    January 28, 2018

# John: It would appear that the proposed plan is flawed from the start

From: **John Measell**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 5:14 PM

Subject: Fw: Merrimon Ave. Project

To: "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>

Mr. Hood,

I neglected to include you in my email to Mr. Clark. I apologize for any inconvenience.

Regards,

John Measell

Asheville, NC

Dear Mr. Clark,

Although I was unable to attend the recent public hearing on the Merrimon Ave. widening project, it would appear that the proposed plan is flawed from the start.

NCDOT failed to invite participation from the City of Asheville during the design and development of this project. Merrimon Ave. is a state-maintained road, however, NCDOT sought no input from the City and how the plan impacts local neighborhoods.

The proposed plan does not take into account the desire of the City to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and local residents.

Widening Merrimon Ave. is not necessary as traffic flow has remained relatively flat for more than a decade. If the proposed plan was implemented, it would increase traffic, speed and accidents along the corridor.

Using advanced left turn traffic signals appears to be a possible option but NCDOT has failed to explore and propose this approach.

With all due respect, please reconvene your staff and seek participation and input from the City of Asheville, local residents, Merrimon Ave. businesses and pedestrian and bicycle groups.

Regards,

John Measell

Asheville, NC

– John Measell, Grove Park/Sunset January 28, 2018

# Angela: Please take “ Road Diet’ and “ Complete Street” ideas into consideration

From: **Angela McClure**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 1:12 PM

Subject: Widening Merrimon Ave

To: chood@ncdot.gov

Dear Sirs:

With reference to the above proposed widening of Merrimon Ave., I request that the City of Asheville and residents of N. Asheville have some say in the design and construction. Most residents of N. Asheville have been here our entire lives and do realize that the widening is necessary for growth and safety. However we would like to preserve Beaver Lake and the Bird Sanctuary. Please take " Road Diet" and " Complete Street" ideas into consideration as they would incorporate bike lanes be more people friendly and slow the traffic down.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Angela D. McClure

– Angela McClure January 28, 2018

## **Nancy: Do not proceed with this expensive, unwanted and untested plan**

From: **nancy**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 5:33 PM

Subject: objection to the proposed widening on merrimon rd in N Asheville

To: mgclark@ncdot.gov,

The current NCDOT plan requires lengthy study and input from all interested parties; especially those of us who live here. We do not want nor need to clone Hendersonville Rd; widening the rd 36% with 2' meager bike lanes. It is well documented that the wider a road the faster the drivers, the proposed 40 mph limit and the wider rd will encourage drivers to go 50-55. Imagine what the sidewalk will feel like with cars traveling beside you at this speed. All trees will be removed and forbidden.

The meager 2'bike lanes will also be part of the gutter! At present Lakeview Park has a poor 'walk score' of 52. We should improve this, not decrease it.

Additionally the NCDOT has tried to quietly push this plan through while :

- Failing to observe policy and procedure of NCDOT
- No consideration of local context and plans
- Failing to demonstrate needs; the traffic count of 2000 exactly same as last traffic count of 2016, 21000 cars.
- Designing a plan DANGEROUS to non motorized users
- Failing to present alternative proven designs such as a 'road diet' or 'complete street'

If the purpose of this rd is to provide faster access to the growing towns of Weaverville and Woodfin, and the future development of I-26 this is not in the best interests of the Asheville residents and taxpayers.

Do not proceed with this expensive, unwanted and untested plan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Hines

– Nancy Hines January 28, 2018

# **Matt: There are better ways to improve traffic flow than widening it to a 5 lane highway**

From: **Pickett, Matt**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 10:34 AM

Subject: STIP Projects U-5781 and U-5782

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>, "mgclark@ncdot.gov" <mgclark@ncdot.gov>, "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express my concern on the project referenced above to widen Merrimon Ave. As a resident in North Asheville for 14 years, I use Merrimon Ave on a daily basis to get to and from work both by bicycle and automobile and agree that the street could be designed to better accommodate traffic. However, there are better ways to improve traffic flow than widening it to a 5 lane highway.

My biggest concern is that a 5-lane design does not take into account pedestrian or bicycle traffic. I bike commute to work 1-2 days per week on Merrimon Ave (I work in South Asheville so use the entire corridor), and almost daily walk or ride my bike to local businesses. While I see your current design does have a bike lane, it does not meet NCDOT width specifications as it is a two-foot lane that includes the curb and gutter.

Another concern is the greenway connection at WT Weaver and Merrimon Ave. This would be a great opportunity to install a tunnel connecting the greenways under the road. If users would be able to avoid the intersection all together, the intersection would be safer and encourage more usage on the greenway as a whole. I know the greenway is part of the city's master plan for a better, more connected greenway system, and this would be a great opportunity to make that system even better.

The best solution would be a road diet, consisting of 5.5' sidewalks, 5' bike lines and 11' drive lanes on each side of a 12' center turn lane. While the speed through Merrimon might decrease, this design includes multiple modes of transportation, encourages active and public transportation, and most importantly, sets the stage for what the North Asheville community, and Asheville in general, want their city to be. North Asheville needs to maintain it's sense of community and uniqueness and not have a 5 lane thoroughfare running right down the heart of it. We already have I-26 to connect quickly to Weaverville and beyond, and have a 4 lane highway running north with Broadway. Merrimon should be a "neighborhood collector" not an "Arterial road".

A large reason I live here is because Asheville is a progressive city. Adding to the city's inventory of bike lanes, greenways and sidewalks will promote this progress and lead to a more active, healthy and sustainable community.

Sincerely,  
Matt Pickett

– Matt Pickett, North Asheville Community January 28, 2018

## **Ben: As an employee of UNCA ... I am concerned and disturbed that the DOT has not planned for better protection of bicyclists and pedestrians**

From: **Ben Shirley**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 1:14 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard.

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Hello,

I wish to enter public comment on the DOT proposed project "Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard."

As an employee of UNCA and someone that commutes, sometimes by car and sometimes by bike, through the area in questions every weekday I am concerned and disturbed that the DOT has not planned for better protection of bicyclists and pedestrians.

I agree with the findings submitted by the local organization "Asheville on Bikes" that the plan should be changed to increase bike and pedestrian safety and that the DOT should work with the city of Asheville and local organizations to honor local and national standards for safety to find a solution that better benefits the Asheville community.

Thanks for your consideration,

– Ben Shirley January 28, 2018

## **Keaton: I oppose the Project as currently designed and ask that NCDOT's Division**

# 13 plan in partnership with the City of Asheville

From: Keaton Hill

To: chood@ncdot.gov, mgclark@ncdot.gov, kbereis@hntb.com

Subject: Re: NCDOT Division [13, Merrimon](#) Widening, TIP Numbers U-5781 and U-5782

Date: Sun, 28 Jan 2018 15:02:17 -0500

I am a resident of Asheville, and am Emailing my public comment regarding the project to widen Merrimon Ave in Asheville, NC. TIP Numbers U-5781 and U-5782

I oppose the Project as currently designed and ask that NCDOT's Division 13 plan in partnership with the City of Asheville's (COA) Transportation Department and incorporate existing COA plans into NCDOT planning.

I oppose the current design for several reasons, including:

- Risk of pedestrian injury increased. A 5-lane road with a 40 mph design speed is more difficult to cross than the current road. Our current Merrimon recently took the life of one pedestrian, crossing at Coleman.
- Several existing COA plans were not incorporated into NCDOT's proposed Merrimon improvements. The City has spent money and made a decade of planning changes (Rezoning, etc.) on Merrimon that contradict the nature of this design. These plans, based on countless hours of feedback from residents, have been ignored.
- Alternates not presented. NCDOT has not presented alternate designs. For the design as a whole, alternates include a roadway with a lower design speed and narrower lanes. Alternates not presented also include a low impact road connection for Clearview Terrace that takes no homes.
- Greenway improvement ignored. NCDOT is not proposing that the Glenn's Creek Greenway connect, even though they are replacing the culvert and rebuilding the creek through the intersection of WT Weaver. They are putting back a version of the current (unsafe) Greenway connection. During construction, the historic property that UNCA owns on the corner of WT Weaver will be altered forever, via tree removal, grade changes, and a large retaining wall.
- Business closures. Construction is likely to cause several local businesses in this stretch to close permanently. They can expect months of reduced revenue during construction.
- Faster cars. Car speeds are going to dramatically increase because the design speed chosen will allow a driver to feel safe at speeds higher than 40 mph. During the public meeting NCDOT confirmed that a 40 mph design speed was used.

I urge the NCDOT Division 13 to follow existing NCDOT Transportation Policy regarding active transportation, including NCDOT's Complete Street Policy and offer the public alternatives to the current Project that would connect greenways, provide for safe, four-foot bike lanes; that would consider how to enhance bus or other alternative mass transit; and that would focus on enhancing Merrimon as a neighborhood connector rather than an arterial thru way.

Sincerely,

Keaton Hill

– Keaton Hill January 28, 2018

## **Aimee: Merrimon is the main commercial area that UNCA students can access by walking. Making a plan that would likely lead to student deaths is just plain wrong**

From: **Aimee Ellingsen**

Date: Sun, Jan 28, 2018 at 8:34 AM

Subject: Merrimon widening

To: chood@ncdot.gov, mgclark@ncdot.gov

Mr. Hood and Mr. Clark,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Merrimon widening. Anything that would lead to increased speeds would be unsafe for the many pedestrians who use this route. There is no need for commuters to go faster in this section of Merrimon given alternate nearby routes (Broadway and the interstate) give people quick access to Woodfin, North Asheville, etc. Merrimon is a street people use for shopping, eating out, running errands, etc — not for speeding home.

Particularly notable is the fact that this section of Merrimon is the main commercial area that UNCA students can access by walking. **Making a plan that would likely lead to student deaths is just plain wrong.**

**In sum, Merrimon Ave is not like other state highways; it is a neighborhood artery.**

As such, NCDOT should instead be planning for a *complete* street that increases safety for the many walkers and cyclists in the small neighborhoods surrounding this segment of Merrimon.

NCDOT's plan should also allow for connection of our existing and planned local Greenways.

Thank you in advance for making efforts towards a street that will truly serve all the people that use it.

Aimee Ellingsen

Local business owner

– Aimee Ellingsen, North Asheville Community January 28, 2018

## **Nanci: I feel unsafe riding in the gutter, especially with my kids on board**

Hello and thank you in advance for considering my comment,



I, like many other Asheville citizens, have concerns about the proposed plan to widen Merrimon Avenue and would like to briefly express my concerns.

I agree that Merrimon needs to change. It is frustrating for drivers and unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians. Unfortunately, I feel that the proposed plan does not address the needs of all these groups.

My husband and I are both love to ride our bikes and often ride with our children, who are 5 and 2 years old. We are about to move to Hillside Street, just off Merrimon and would love a safe way to ride our bikes to the many wonderful local businesses just up this community road. A 2 foot bike lane does not seem adequate and I feel unsafe riding in the gutter, especially with my kids on board.

In short, I would love Merrimon to be a complete street, a street that allows drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians to travel safely alongside each other to the benefit of the businesses in the area and the quality of life in this very special city.

Sincerely,

Nanci Mackey

– Nanci Mackey, Chestnut Hills January 27, 2018

## **Rich: Do not create a 5 lane road with a continuous center turn lane**

From: **Rich Owings**

Date: Sat, Jan 27, 2018 at 3:02 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue comments (U-5781, U-5782)

To: chood@ncdot.gov, kbereis@hntb.com, mgclark@ncdot.gov

Hi,

Please accept my comments below for the proposed Merrimon Avenue project:

- I support turn lanes at Weaver and Edgewood, with the following caveats...
- Do not create a 5 lane road with a continuous center turn lane. These result in increased pedestrian fatalities.
- Consider instead having a divided four lane similar to Broadway with turn lanes only at Edgewood and Weaver
- Consider traffic circles to eliminate stoplights and allow shoppers to easily switch directions to reach businesses on the other side of the road
- Put a dedicated bicycle climbing lane on the east side of Merrimon from Murdock to Gracelyn and on the west side from Weaver to Coleman
- Connect the Reed Creek greenway on each side of Merrimon so that greenway traffic does not have to cross Merrimon. This should be done along the creek thru an expanded box culvert
- There should be wide sidewalks on both sides of Merrimon, running the entire length of the project

Thank you,

Rich Owings

– Rich Owings January 27, 2018

## **Nancy: There are other suitable, alternate plans that would be much more in line with the needs of the local residents and community**

From: **Nancy Flippin and Mindy Allen**

Date: Sat, Jan 27, 2018 at 12:10 PM

Subject: Proposed changes to Merrimon Ave

To: chood@ncdot.gov

I am writing to voice my concerns regarding the proposed changes to North Merrimon. After reviewing the proposal by DOT and comparing that to other alternatives, I am NOT in favor of the DOT plan for the following reasons:

- the plan does not take into consideration local context and plans
- the plan does not provide any real proof of need for this type of plan
- the plan does not take into consideration the need for safe design for non-motorized users which should be of primary concern
- no alternative proven designs were considered or presented

There are other suitable, alternate plans that would be much more in line with the needs of the local residents and community

Merrimon does not need to be “high” speed throughput corridor. It makes much more sense for Merrimon to be a “complete” street which provides for vehicular as well as non-motorized traffic and is much more consistent with being part of a neighborhood rather than a highway. There are other alternatives to connecting Clearview Terrace that make much more sense than what DOT is proposing. Additionally, the DOT plan does not provide any connection to the Greenway even though we are being taxed to pay for this.

Some of the slow downs and issues on Merrimon could be mitigated by installing turn signals at WT Weaver and at Edgewood—this seems to me to be a “no brainer” to assist with traffic flow.

The roads of Asheville need to be designed to meet the needs of the residents first and foremost rather than being speedways for cars.

Nancy Flippin

– Nanci Flippin, North Asheville Community January 27, 2018

# **Bruce: The proposed widening of Merrimon Avenue will be very disruptive, and would not improve conditions for all users of the corridor**

From: **Bruce & Day Ann Emory**

Date: Fri, Jan 26, 2018 at 11:08 AM

Subject: Comments on Merrimon Avenue widening project (U-5781 & U-5782)

To: chood@ncdot.gov, mgclark@ncdot.gov, kbereis@hntb.com

The proposed widening of Merrimon Avenue will be very disruptive, and would not improve conditions for all users of the corridor. The project as currently designed does not conform to the Complete Streets Policy of either NCDOT or the City of Asheville. The widening would help auto users. However, it would do nothing for bicycle riders, and does not conform to the City of Asheville's bicycle plans. Pedestrians would see mixed results. The new sidewalk sections on the west side are significant improvements. However, pedestrians would be negatively affected by having to walk next to traffic travelling at higher speeds as a result of the wider roadway, wider lanes, and higher design speed. It would also be more difficult for pedestrians to cross much-wider Merrimon.

Before embarking on such a major project, serious consideration should be given to a road diet for this section. A three-lane road diet would provide space for bicycle lanes in both directions in conformance with the City's adopted plans. This could be done within the existing street width using lane widths in NCDOT's Complete Streets Policy: three 10 to 11 foot traffic lanes and two 6 to 8 foot bike lanes. With turn signals at intersections, this would improve the left-turn situation. The bicycle lanes would serve as buffers between pedestrians and fast-moving traffic. It would be much less disruptive and expensive. The only initial drawback would be not filling in the west-side sidewalk gaps, but this could be done as a separate project if the road diet is successful.

FHWA literature shows that road diets are generally successful for daily volumes up to 20,000, and in some cases they have worked with volumes as high as 26,000. Charlotte has two successful examples with volumes around 20,000. The current volume on Merrimon at Edgewood is 20,000, and the volume has decreased steadily over the last 18 years: 1998: 26,000; 2004: 24,000; 2010: 21,000. This trend, despite increases in population during that period, raises serious questions about the validity of the computer model projection of higher volumes in 2040.

While there is uncertainty about whether a road diet would work well with the traffic volumes on Merrimon, there are ways to evaluate whether it would be successful. One way is to implement

the road diet for a test period of six months or so, and then evaluate the results. The cost of such a test would be limited to striping paint, plus the left-turn signals that would be needed anyway for the widening project. An alternative would be to do a detailed computer simulation of traffic flows. This would require some additional data collection for speeds, vehicle spacing, etc. In either case, the road diet test should be extended north to a more logical terminus at Gracelyn (see #2 below).

If the road diet test is successful, follow-on projects should include completing the missing sidewalk links, and extending the road diet north along Merrimon to Beaver Lake, and south to Harris-Teeter or possibly I-240. All of this could probably be completed at no more cost than the currently proposed 0.6 mile widening.

If a test of a road diet results in congestion that all parties agree is unacceptable, I recommend the following changes to the proposed widening plan:

1. Revise the cross-section width allocation to provide adequate bicycle lanes in both directions. The City of Asheville's Comprehensive Bicycle Plan (2008), funded by NCDOT, called for a bicycle climbing lane in this section; this plan is referenced in the 2009 Community Conditions Report prepared by NCDOT for this project. The more recent Asheville In Motion (AIM) plan, completed in 2016, calls for bicycle lanes in both directions on Merrimon. This can be done without increasing the proposed width of the project by reducing the traffic lane widths from 11-13 feet to 10-11 feet, thus providing two six-foot bike lanes. The narrower traffic lanes are consistent with NCDOT's Complete Streets policy, and with successful road diets in Charlotte and elsewhere.
2. Extend the project north to the existing five-lane section at Gracelyn. There are significant left-turn volumes at McDonald's, the Post Office, and Larchmont Road, with additional left turns at other businesses along this two-block section. It would also be unsafe to terminate the bike lanes before reaching the top of the long upgrade from Murdoch to Gracelyn. It would also make sense to cause all of the disruption at one time.
3. Provide a short (approx. 40 feet) section of sidewalk on the south side of Weaver at Merrimon. This will allow the addition of an inbound bus stop for ART routes N1 and N2. The current bus stop for this area is westbound on Weaver, which forces passengers to ride an extra 5-10 minutes around the UNCA loop before returning to the same intersection and then continuing south on Merrimon to downtown.
4. Consider running the greenway connection between Weaver Park and the Glenn's Creek Greenway in a culvert under the Weaver/Merrimon intersection instead of crossing Merrimon at grade.
5. Reduce construction staging impacts near Weaver by reducing the number of lanes during construction and using slower speeds and tighter curves for the detour.
6. Connect Clearview Terrace to Edgewood Knoll Road instead of Chatham Road.
7. Reduce widths of curb cuts to the minimum needed for driveway access, in order to maximize the extent of sidewalks with curbs, e.g. at Vinnie's, Asheville Pizza and other locations. Consolidate driveways wherever possible.
8. Relocate all utility poles behind the sidewalk or between the sidewalk and curb.

9. In segments where there would not be left-turning traffic, replace the center lane with short segments of landscaped median. Also, replace trees that are taken with new trees between the sidewalk and curb or behind the sidewalk.

Bruce Emory

– Bruce Emory, North Asheville Community January 26, 2018

## **Geneva: Absolutely do NOT widen Merrimon Ave- crucial time in our development where our decisions will determine the type of city we are becoming**

From: **Geneva Bierce-Wilson**

Date: Fri, Jan 26, 2018 at 6:55 PM

Subject: Regarding STIP Project No's U-5781 and U-5782

To: kberis@hntb.com, mgclark@ncdot.gov, chood@ncdot.gov

To whom it may concern,

Absolutely do NOT widen Merrimon Ave. I have lived my entire life in Asheville and I have loved watching the city grow in the past 30 years. This is a crucial time in our development where our decisions will determine the type of city we are becoming.

As it stands traffic moves too quickly on Merrimon to accommodate the growing needs of pedestrian traffic. I have lived a few hundred feet from Merrimon avenue for the last 8 years. From my home I hear the all too often "crunch" of car crashes on this dangerous street. In my own life I have two dear friends that were hit by a car while riding a scooter down Merrimon by a car turning left across two lanes of traffic. One was thrown from the bike and landed safely (thanks helmets!) while the other was pinned down breaking his femur. On a separate occasion another dear friend was hit by a left turning car as he walked in the crosswalk with a walk signal. As is this street is already too dangerous, the idea of widening it further is disgraceful.

Four lanes are good for interstates, and for roads that are not in themselves a destination, but surely as Merrimon becomes a urban corridor we must plan to narrow it. Despite the only minor improvements to the sidewalks there continues to be more people walking, biking and riding the bus every year.

During my time a Warren Wilson College I had the great privileged of spending a semester abroad in Belfast, Northern Ireland. There I lived just a short walk to the Falls Road. It is easy for me to see the parallels between the Falls road and 25. Both connect residential areas to the downtown, both have a hospital, both are full of businesses, and the distance across from

property to property is similar. The Falls road really has two lanes for the most part, then it has pull offs for buses at all of the bus stops, and designated left turn lanes (okay technically right turn lanes because it is the UK) at intersections, the extra space being given to side walks. This road is full of pedestrians. It accommodates a huge amount of people with varying modes of transit. Of course a big part of what makes it all work so well is Belfast's bus system. They have a huge fleet of buses, something I believe Asheville should aspire to. After all why would we aspire to have more traffic and more dangerous roads?

It is time to start thinking of Merrimon as a destination and not primarily a connector. The city is changing and it is our job to make it a better and safer place, not a more dangerous one.

Thank you for your time,  
Geneva Bierce-Wilson

– Geneva Bierce-Wilson, North Asheville Community January 26, 2018

## **AI: Investigate alternative options, including Road Diet and Complete Street options which would encourage slower speeds, promote pedestrian safety**

From: **AI Schlimm**

Date: Thu, Jan 25, 2018 at 11:36 AM

Subject: Design for Merrimon Avenue, Asheville NC

To: [chood@ncdot.gov](mailto:chood@ncdot.gov)

To Whom It May Concern –

We and our neighbors have recently become aware of the state's intention to undertake a major renovation of Merrimon Avenue, a street we use every day. We have reviewed the proposed design and are extremely concerned that it will not serve the community well. We strongly recommend that the state work with the City of Asheville with the goal of better accommodating our needs, and we strongly encourage the state to investigate alternative options, including Road Diet and Complete Street options which would encourage slower speeds, promote pedestrian safety, and increase bike access and safety.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

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**AI Schlimm & Joan D'Entremont**

– AI Schlimm, North Asheville Community January 25, 2018

# **Michael: for the sake of my city's safety-please adopt a 'Complete Streets' model for the project on Merrimon**

From: **Michael Craft**

Date: Thu, Jan 25, 2018 at 2:20 PM

Subject: Merrimon in Asheville

To: "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>

NCDOT, for the sake of my city's safety-please adopt a 'Complete Streets' model for the project on Merrimon. I'd rather spend a couple more minutes in my car at a lower rate of speed so that individuals who choose (or have to) ride a bicycle or walk can get safely to our destinations.

Please help Asheville become the bicycle and pedestrian friendly city it's residents want.

Thank you for your consideration...

Michael Craft

New Belgium Brewing Company

Employee Owner & Asheville VIPer Ambassador

– Michael Craft, Kenilworth January 25, 2018

# **Eric: I am writing to urge you to reconsider the proposal to widen Merrimon Avenue in Asheville. I live near Merrimon Avenue and use it on a daily basis**

From: Eric Nelson

Date: Thu, Jan 25, 2018 at 11:33 AM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue Proposed Changes

To: chood@ncdot.gov

Dear Mr. Hood:

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the proposal to widen Merrimon Avenue in Asheville. I live near Merrimon Avenue and use it on a daily basis. It's not my favorite road in Asheville because of the speed of the cars, but the current proposal will make a not-great situation even worse. I walk my dog on the greenway every day and cross Merrimon at W.T. Weaver Blvd. Crossing

Merrimon is scary enough as is, but it would be a true nightmare if the the road were even wider.

Asheville is unique. That's why I moved here. I love the neighborhoods, the parks, the walkability of almost all areas of the city. I love the fact that people care about the city.

The current proposal will turn a key road in the city into a freeway, impacting businesses and the quality of life of every city resident. It's not just the citizens of the city that will be affected.

The proposal will also affect how tourists view the city. As you know, tourism is our economic engine. People come here for the ambiance, the trees, the mountains, the fresh air, the unique shops and restaurants, all of which will be negatively affected by the proposal.

Please, don't "improve" Merrimon Avenue in the fashion that is proposed. We don't need more cars moving faster. We need incentives to ride bikes, walk, slow down and enjoy the city;

Please, follow the state rules for community input;

Please, propose alternatives that fully consider the environment and quality of life;

Please, work with City Council to ensure any adopted plan is consistent with existing vision plans;

Please, consider left turn lights at the Edgewood Rd. intersection;

Please, prioritize handicap-accessible sidewalks on the west side of Merrimon and highly visible crosswalks at Edgewood Rd., Chatham Road, and between Edgewood Knoll Road and Edgewood Rd.

Thank you,

Eric Nelson

– Eric Nelson, North Asheville Community    January 25, 2018

## **Emily: NCDOT's proposed plan completely misses the mark with both process and design**

From: **Emily Kujawa**

Date: Thu, Jan 25, 2018 at 3:25 PM

Subject: Public input: Merrimon Avenue widening proposal (NCDOT Division 13)

To: kbereis@hntb.com, chood@ncdot.gov

To Whom It May Concern,

I am submitting input on the Merrimon Avenue widening project as an Asheville resident, a public health professional, and an enthusiastic-and-extremely-concerned bicyclist. NCDOT's proposed plan for widening Merrimon Ave from W.T. Weaver Boulevard to Edgewood Road completely misses the mark with both process and design, and fails to meet the needs of all residents who wish to travel this corridor on bicycles and on foot.



The process used to develop this plan—particularly the apparent complete lack of engagement with the City of Asheville, and the fact that no alternatives were presented to the public—is incredibly troubling. Further, the proposed design itself would make this corridor (which is already notoriously treacherous for bicyclists attempting to travel between North Asheville and the downtown area) even worse. This design mimics some of the worst roads in the Asheville area and runs completely counter to the groundswell of support in Asheville for people-centered road design that allows residents and visitors to move throughout the city safely and by many different modes.

The City of Asheville has already invested years of effort to develop thoughtful, comprehensive plans for improving multi-modal transportation in our community, including the [Asheville in Motion \(AIM\)](#) plan and the [Asheville City 2025 Plan](#). NCDOT's Division 13 should partner with the CoA Transportation Department to align designs for improvements to Merrimon Ave with these existing plans.

The current proposal does not even align with NCDOT's own [Complete Street Policy](#), or with [NC's Vision Zero Policy](#), which both call for close coordination and partnership with local government to design complete streets that optimize mobility and safety for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users. NCDOT Division 13 should ensure that the process it uses to develop alternatives for the Merrimon Ave corridor, as well as the details of those alternatives, align with the existing guidelines in these policies.

Finally, the current proposed design does not meet existing federal standards or align with evidence-based design guidelines from the [American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials](#) (AASHTO). In particular, the proposed 2-foot bicycle lane along with a planned 40 mile per hour speed limit is a glaring failure to align with AASTHO recommendations of at least 4 feet bike lanes. Sub-standard design is a recipe for even greater safety issues for bicyclists and pedestrians.

I am disappointed and extremely concerned by the total lack of engagement with the City of Asheville, the lack of proposed alternatives, and the proposed design which leaves bicyclists effectively fending for themselves against high-speed vehicular traffic. As a bicyclist I am convinced this design will leave me and my fellow bicyclists far worse off than we are now. I encourage NCDOT Division 13 to go back to the drawing board and work closely with the CoA, local businesses, and residents, to design a Merrimon Avenue that works for us all.

Sincerely,

Emily Kujawa

Emily Kujawa, MPH, RD

Executive Director, Kujawa Consulting

– Emily Kujawa January 25, 2018

## **Heath: The idea of a 2 foot bike way is simply negligent**

From: **Heath Dotson**

Date: Wed, Jan 24, 2018 at 10:25 AM

Subject: DOT plan for Merrimon Ave.

To: kberais@hntb.com, mgclark@ncdot.gov

I'm writing to let you know that as a cyclist and resident of Asheville I oppose the Merrimon widening project as proposed. This was done ignoring the city and DOT's own joint multimodal policy for new projects. It was also proposed without the city's input. They are designing this for a 45mph speed which is beyond dangerous. This is also likely to eliminate several local businesses on Merrimon.

The idea of a 2 foot bike way is simply negligent. The agreed upon minimum is 48 inches with a preferred 60 inch right of way. The two foot gutter does not count as a right of way or bike lane.

I highly encourage you to work with the city to correct this and come up with a solution that benefits the city and it's residents, not just through traffic.

Sincerely,

**Heath Dotson** Head Coach, *HD Coaching, HDSports, LLC*

– Heath Dotson January 24, 2018

## **Coalter: The main problem is not the inconvenience or travel times of motorists, it is cyclist and pedestrian safety**

From: **Coalter Lathrop**

Date: Wed, Jan 24, 2018 at 11:18 AM

Subject: opposed to Merrimon Ave project

To: mgclark@ncdot.gov

Dear Mr. Clark,

I sent the email copied below to Kim Bereis. The Citizen Times indicates that you are the correct person within NCDOT to contact regarding the ill-conceived Merrimon Avenue widening project. I have not heard back from Ms Bereis.

I do hope that you will acknowledge your receipt of this email.

Best regards,

Coalter Lathrop

Dear Ms. Bereis,

I write as a motorist, cyclist and pedestrian who lives one block off Merrimon Avenue and who uses it throughout each day to travel to and from my home and to access businesses along Merrimon. I also write as a parent of two Asheville City School students who must cross Merrimon every day to access their school bus.

I oppose the NCDOT proposed widening of Merrimon Avenue. The main problem is not the inconvenience or travel times of motorists, it is cyclist and pedestrian safety for those citizens as they travel across and along Merrimon Avenue.

If there is to be any widening of this important transportation corridor, it should be dedicated to increasing the infrastructure for bikes and walkers.

That could include, among other things:

bicycle lanes in both directions (or a single widened lane for car and bicycle travel in each direction with one center turn lane);

raised crosswalks with pedestrian refuges and signage at all cross streets;

medians between sidewalks and car travel lanes;

reduced speed limits for cars.

Slower car speeds will be better for all users and neighbors of Merrimon Avenue.

I urge you to reconsider the poorly-conceived Merrimon Ave widening.

Best regards,

Coalter Lathrop

– Coalter Lathrop, Chestnut Hills January 24, 2018

## **Amy: I am a resident of the Beaverdam Valley...I see a plan built for cars not people**

From: **Amy Jones**

Date: Wed, Jan 24, 2018 at 12:23 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue Project – Asheville, NC

To: chood@ncdot.gov

Mr. Hood,

I am a resident of the Beaverdam Valley here in Asheville. I drive the Merrimon Avenue corridor that the State is proposing to redo, every single day. I have seen the proposed additions to the road, namely a turning lane, curb improvements, faster moving lanes, and all I see is more traffic. I see a plan built for cars not people. I see a way to achieve a means that will end what hopes for more & safer pedestrian/bicycle use any of us have for our busy, beloved part of town.

Certainly there are places along this identified part of the road that could greatly benefit from a designated turn lane, so make one, and keep the other, single lane for traffic in each direction while accounting for a bike lane. You have had one public meeting and offered one set of ideas

but certainly there are others and most especially, there must be ideas where people are considered more integrally to the design.

This draft, what has been proposed, I've been down this road before. It's also called Hendersonville Road, South Tunnel Road and Leicester Highway and I am NOT INTERESTED in you guys repeating those roads over here. Merrimon Avenue has real design flaws to be sure but *this* design, the maximum cars, higher speed with no account for healthy, people powered traffic (i.e. bikes, walking, skateboarding) is NOT the way to go. It's not where I want to drive every day.

Sincerely,  
Amy Jones

January 24, 2018

## **Beach: What can we do to prevent the changes that disregard those of us living here?**

From: **Beach Hensley**

Date: Wed, Jan 24, 2018 at 3:07 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Kim,

I am in opposition of the proposed changes to Merrimon Avenue. My family of 4 and I run, bike and walk across the intersection of the Reed Creek Greenway and Merrimon Avenue at W.T. Weaver Blvd. It is dangerous with the current speed limit and people regularly run the red light on Merrimon and W.T.Weaver. We support local businesses as well as public parks and greenways via alternative transportation methods. This is our neighborhood. What can we do to prevent the changes that disregard those of us living here?

sincerely

– Beach Hensley January 24, 2018

## **Pamela: Years ago one of my 4th grade students at Claxton Elementary was killed in traffic because she did a poor job of crossing Merrimon at WT Weaver**

From: **Pamela Cauble**

Date: Tue, Jan 23, 2018 at 12:44 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Merrimon Avenue does **not** need to accommodate more cars. It needs to offer more pedestrian space and safer bicycle traffic. It needs **fewer** lanes to cross, not more. It needs slower traffic, (20 MPH, maybe?), and a vigilant crack down on drivers texting! It is a dangerous place to walk and drive.

Years ago one of my 4th grade students at Claxton Elementary was killed in traffic because she did a poor job of crossing Merrimon Avenue at WT Weaver. There was no sidewalk from WT Weaver Road on the west side for far too long a distance. There's still no sidewalk there. This is dangerous and has had fatal consequences.

Please do not turn four lanes into five. Turn them into three and add bike lanes and sidewalks. And don't forget to plant trees along the way.

Sincerely,

Pamela Cauble

– Pamela Cauble, North Asheville Community January 23, 2018

## **Justin: recommend not going through with the current plan**

From: **Justin Quinn**

Date: Tue, Jan 23, 2018 at 4:03 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Hi,

Just wanted to give some input to the City and the NCDOT and recommend not going through with the current plan. Being a local, growing up in Weaverville, and a new homeowner in Woodfin, I've been traveling down Merrimon Ave my whole life. I've always enjoyed the businesses on that stretch of road, and feel that a lot of tourists and out of towners don't get to enjoy them. If the decision was made to make Merrimon more bicycle and pedestrian friendly, we'd be benefiting locals and tourists alike. I think that Merrimon has enormous potential to become an example of how improving bike and foot travel can overall improve safety, traffic, and entrepreneurship for the whole city to enjoy. Thank you for listening.

Cordially,

Justin Quinn

– Justin Quinn January 23, 2018

# **Mary: When the DOT ignores the feedback from residents, it is not appreciated.**

From: **Mary Buttitta**

Date: Tue, Jan 23, 2018 at 10:26 AM

Subject: Merrimon Widening project – public comment

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim Bereis,

I am writing to tell you that I am NOT in favor of the proposed NCDOT plan to widen Merrimon Avenue. I might be in favor of a plan that takes into consideration what the citizens of Asheville want, which so far have been ignored by the DOT. I might favor a plan that connects the greenway and supports bike and pedestrian traffic. But so far I have not seen those plans. I live on the north side of Asheville for a reason – it does not look like the south side which looks like every other sprawled out city USA. I would like to see a bike and pedestrian friendly proposal and I am just not seeing it with this plan. I don't want to encourage higher speeds along this road. I don't want to see the businesses I frequent negatively affected and maybe forced out of business. I think you can do better.

I DO WANT to keep at least one part of our city quaint and with a small town feel and not become a Charlotte. Asheville is already struggling with too much growth and not enough intentionality in planning. BUT the City has spent money and made a decade of planning changes on Merrimon that contradict the nature of this proposed design. So when the DOT ignores the feedback from residents, it is not appreciated.

Thank you for this opportunity and please reconsider.

Best,

Mary Buttitta

– Mary Buttitta, North Asheville Community    January 23, 2018

# **Jamie: I am very concerned about the plans proposed for Merrimon Avenue and what it will do to our community**

From: **Jamie Gilpin**

Date: Tue, Jan 23, 2018 at 10:46 AM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Widening

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Hi Kim,

I am a North Asheville resident, a parent of 2 children that go to school in north Asheville (Jones Elementary & Blue Ridge Montessori), a cyclist, and a business owner that commutes to an office in downtown Asheville.

My father (Jim Gilpin) collaborated with Jay Swain before my father retired from the US Forest Service. He has spoken highly of Jay, and I'm sure that Jay would be reasonable in addressing the below issues and solutions.

I am very concerned about the plans proposed for Merrimon Avenue and what it will do to our community. Here are my issues:

- The proposed changes will encourage the increase in speeds along Merrimon Avenue. The wider lanes with the turn lane will increase the ease of speed.
- This will undoubtedly result in higher risk of injuries to not only motorists but also pedestrians and cyclists. If anything SLOWER speeds need to be encouraged to retain the sense of community.
- The speed will restrict the ease of accessing local businesses, causing financial issues.
- The community feel of the street will be lost if it ends up looking and feeling like Hendersonville Road (Hwy 25) south of Asheville. We don't want another road like that, which loses the sense of community between residential and local business areas.
- Merrimon road is indeed a community road, and not a road needing high flow to get anywhere in a farther distance than the northern neighborhoods of Asheville. Longer drives are best served on the current "future I-26".

I see this Merrimon project and its as needing the following. These are all prefaced with clear, effective, and timely communication between all parties.

- Collaborate with the City of Asheville and its residents. Consult the following plans already in place:
  - [Asheville in Motion \(AIM\)](#)
  - 
  - [Asheville City 2025 Plan](#)
  - 
  - [NCDOT's Community Characteristics Report, US 25 \(Merrimon Ave\) King Street to Maney Avenue: Operational Improvements City of Asheville, Buncombe County \(CCR\)](#)
- Follow DOT's own policies as well as Federal guidelines:
  - [NCDOT's Complete Street Policy](#)
  - 
  - [NC's Vision Zero Policy](#)
  - 
  - [American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials](#)

The bottom line is that we need to collaborate and construct multiple solutions for Merrimon on which all stakeholders can give proper input. That is the only way that a suitable solution can be reached which residents will be happy with.

I am happy to be involved and participate in these discussions and talk with Jay directly.

Thanks – Jamie

– Jamie Gilpin, North Asheville Community January 23, 2018

## **Jeannine: I think a larger viewpoint needs to be taken as to the greater community and what benefits the area the most**

From: **Jeannine Wynne**

Date: Mon, Jan 22, 2018 at 1:47 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue Project

To: "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>

Good Afternoon Mr. Hood,

I realize that your job is not easy and that you are trying to find what appears to be the most effective route for the least amount of tax dollars spent with a goal to keep traffic moving smoothly on the State Roads. But I think sometimes a larger viewpoint needs to be taken as to the greater community and what benefits the area the most. The proposed Merrimon Avenue Project looks familiar in structure because it has been used in other sections of the Greater Asheville area, and in most cases the original goal of "moving people faster" either doesn't actually come to fruition or causes more of a hindrance with an increase in accidents. I live off of Hendersonville Road and I do travel on Merrimon Avenue for work and personal reasons. I feel much frustration at Hendersonville road as far as it's layout. It's not conducive to the residents and neighborhoods that it should be primarily providing for – instead of sidewalks and bike lanes and the ease of access to the businesses along that stretch of road, it feels more like a frustrating stretch of highway that was only mean to get people from Asheville to I-26 (not even all the way to Hendersonville as most people exit off way prior to reaching that town) and not considering the communities, businesses and residents that sit on either side of that portion of Hwy 25. In an effort to keep down accidents, traffic lights are added, which deter from the original intent of "moving people faster". That makes me think that by wanting to take this concept and apply it to Merrimon Avenue/Hwy 25 on the other side of Asheville is because it must be, to the bottom line, "more affordable."

But will it really be more affordable in the long run? If there is a decrease in the amount of business done to the smaller shops and restaurants during construction, hindrances and "imminent domain usage" of residential neighborhoods to complete, and an increase in potential accidents and fatalities – is it really what makes the most economic sense for both DOT and the taxpayers who are using Merrimon? Asheville as a community is growing, and I understand that the roads need to grow with it. As a vehicular commuter, I am not immune to the frustrations of increased traffic and waiting as someone make a "left hand turn" on Merrimon. But would I want to arrive to my destination of in the Beaver Lake/Woodfin area thirty seconds faster if I knew that



it would cause someone's life? If we continue to grow as a city, will we not "outgrow" the productiveness of the speed factor that is the base concept of this project in a few years? Are there not alternate solutions for this project that would include a "complete street" and not just focus on cars? That would allow pedestrians and bike usage safely? That might even take into account the City planning along Merrimon (NCDOT's 2009 Complete Street Policy), the City of Asheville Comprehensive Bicycle Plan, the Glenn's Creek Greenway connection, and an alternative to Clearview Terrace that will not take away someone's home?

I understand that the "concept" of a state road is to move people from Point A to Point B – but when you ignore the neighborhoods around it, the people who use it, and the businesses that border it, you might as well just build a freeway that doesn't connect to anyone or anything but those Point A and Point B. Merrimon Ave is a vital artery in North Asheville and is used by locals and tourists alike to get to scenic areas, to get to churches, libraries, restaurants, grocery stores and to get home. I think all who use that road have the same basic notion that we want to do that safely for both ourselves, our fellow drivers, pedestrians, and bus and bike commuters. Thank you, Mr. Hood, for your time and consideration. I appreciate you and your committee listening to the viewpoints of the public and taking it into consideration. I hope that you will re-evaluate the proposed project and look at alternative options that will be of benefit to all who use Merrimon.

Cheers,  
Jeannine Wynne

– Jeanine West January 22, 2018

## **Wes: Father of 10 month old twins, I want my girls to grow up in a place where they can be pedestrians and cyclists**

From: Wes Gibson

Date: Mon, Jan 22, 2018 at 2:24 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Blvd

To: "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>, "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

Hello everyone,

First off, thanks for taking the time to read my concerns regarding the proposed alterations to Merrimon Ave in Asheville, NC. We appreciate that your time is valuable, and I hope that you value input from the citizens of Asheville/Buncombe County. With the rapid growth in the city of Asheville, we want what is best for not only the current citizens of Asheville, but we also want to think of future citizens as well. As the father of 10 month old twins, I want my girls to grow up in a place where they can be pedestrians and cyclists. And I want them to feel safe being either.

Please consider revising your plans for Merrimon Avenue. In Asheville, we'd love to see more complete streets being built to support our cycling and pedestrian community. These streets allow for an alleviation of the current traffic woes, while also allowing safe passage for cyclists and pedestrians. The City of Asheville has spent time and money working on designs for Merrimon Avenue. All of which conflict with your proposed design. The City of Asheville Comprehensive Bike plan, which was reviewed and endorsed by the NCDOT, identified needs for Merrimon. All of these needs seem to be ignored in your proposed changes. As well, the proposed changes include a 2 foot shared bicycle lane on a road with a 40 mph design. This does not conform to the AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) guidelines pertaining to active transportation standards. We have other streets in Asheville that were built very similar to this proposal. They don't allow for pedestrian/cyclist safety. We don't want to repeat mistakes on Merrimon Avenue. Please consider what I'm saying. Thanks again for your time.

**Wes Gibson**

– Wes Gibson January 22, 2018

## **Rachel: I've transitioned from bicycling as my main method of transportation in my former state to now relying on my car in Asheville, as the roads here have just too fast of speeds**

From: **Rachel Herndon**

Date: Mon, Jan 22, 2018 at 2:42 PM

Subject: AVL – Merrimon Rd. widening

To: choood@ncdot.gov

Hello,

I'm writing in regards to the NCDOT's initial plans to widen Merrimon in North Asheville, NC. As a transplant and now long-term resident of Asheville, I am dismayed at the lack of safety on roads to promote inclusion of bicyclists. Even the lack of simple sidewalks for pedestrians is noteworthy. As Merrimon is one of the few non-highway roads in this city, it's extremely important to me that any "upgrades" to it involve thinking of how to help bicyclists navigate the streets of Asheville (i.e. focus on including bicycle lanes that allow bicyclists to ride alongside traffic without forcing cars to move across any other traffic lanes/force bicyclists to either go off-road/fear they'll be hit).

Despite owning two bicycles, I've transitioned from bicycling as my main method of transportation in my former state to now relying on my car in Asheville, as the roads here have just too fast of speeds and are too narrow for my comfort. The strong presence of highways connecting major parts of the town also disallow bicyclists to safely travel. Again, I'd like to emphasize that since Merrimon is one of the main roads in Asheville that isn't a highway, it is vital to preserve & improve upon its integrity to provide an alternative route for bicyclists. As tourism in AVL increases, native AVL citizens may in turn bike more frequently if such road improvements are made.

Please, consider and implement plans for Merrimon to become a road with an adequately wide bicycle lane, measures to calm traffic that don't affect anyone's commute, or at the simplest, add sidewalks that pedestrians & bicyclists may share.

Thank you,

Rachel Herndon

– Rachel Herndon January 22, 2018

## **Jon: Design a solution that is oriented toward a “complete street” design**

From: **Jon Sarver**

Date: Mon, Jan 22, 2018 at 6:56 AM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Proposed widening

To: “chood@ncdot.gov” <chood@ncdot.gov>

Mr. Hood-

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed the DOT project to widen Merrimon Ave. between Coleman and Edgewood Road. I have lived in Asheville 28 years and I have spent lots of time traveling that section of Merriman Ave by car and bicycle. I encourage the NCDOT to work with the City of Asheville and concerned local citizens to design a solution that is oriented toward a “complete street” design. The design should embrace pedestrian and cycling access and safety issues as well as neighborhood issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jon Sarver

Sarver Realty Group,LLC

– Jon Sarver January 22, 2018

# **Lisa: I live on Murdock Avenue and I cross Merrimon almost daily to use the bike path that runs along W.T. Weaver**

From: **Lisa Neylan**

Date: Sun, Jan 21, 2018 at 6:39 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Widening Project: Dangerous and anti-community

To: [kbereis@hntb.com](mailto:kbereis@hntb.com)

I live on Murdock Avenue and I cross Merrimon almost daily to use the bike path that runs along W.T. Weaver. I have almost been hit by cars turning left from W.T. Weaver several times. Merrimon is already dangerous enough, we do not need to increase the volume and speed of traffic.

I also patronize several businesses on Merrimon on a weekly basis. One of the reasons I purchased my home was due to the walkability of the area. People are migrating toward areas of greater walkability, not less. To widen streets to make them more car-friendly is going backward, not forward. Look at where housing prices have shot up lately—it's in the walkable areas. Let's be smart about development and make the Merrimon Ave corridor MORE walkable, not less.

Thank you,  
Lisa Neylan

– Lisa Neylan, Murdock/Linden January 21, 2018

# **David: As a rental property owner ...We do not need a high-speed pass through road here**

From: **David Voorhees**

Date: Sun, Jan 21, 2018 at 11:35 AM

Subject: Asheville North Merrimon Ave. DOT Project

As a rental property owner in Norwood Park I would like to make the following comments on the proposed project to widen and alter Merrimon Ave. in the Weaver Blvd. area:

My research shows that there is not significant increased traffic in this area in recent years.

- The proposal would drastically alter the neighborhood character of the whole area without addressing the real needs of any problems that exist: safe walkable and bicycle zones adjacent

to Merrimon; safe, well spaced and accessible crosswalks on Merrimon and the feeder streets; and a need for traffic calming.

- The Murdock/Merrimon/Woodward plan as proposed is highly problematic for the Norwood Park neighborhood: limiting quick emergency vehicle access, unsafe crosswalks, negatively affecting residential routing.
- The traffic pattern for the car wash was ill designed for its location and should be re-engineered. The residents should not be adversely affected because of that one business.
- The Merrimon crossing for the Glenn Creek Greenway needs to be improved.
- We do not need a high-speed pass through road here. Rather than fast for some, we need the full scope of the neighborhood addressed: pedestrian, residential based, parks, greenway, bicycle friendly and safe for all.

Thanks for listening.

David Voorhees

– David Vorhees, Norwood Park January 21, 2018

## **Michele: An important way to reduce congestion on Merrimon Avenue is to make it convenient and safe for people who live and work nearby to get about on foot, by bicycle, or using public transit**

From: Michele N. Dohse

Date: Sat, Jan 20, 2018 at 6:21 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue widening: public comment

To: kbereis@hntb.com

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC MTG, 1/8/18, 737 E LARCHMONT RD

TIP No. U-5781 & U-5782

“Intersection Improvements on US 25 (Merrimon Avenue) at Edgewood Road and WT Weaver Boulevard”

I attended the public meeting on January 8 with a long list of questions, few if any of which were satisfactorily answered. I saw very little that I deemed would “enhance safety.” The only possible change I see as an improvement—and this was only on verbal assurance, not from the maps and other materials provided—is that sidewalks are to be extended where they are currently lacking.

It seems to me that an important way to reduce congestion on Merrimon Avenue is to make it convenient and safe for people who live and work nearby to get about on foot, by bicycle, or

using public transit. Instead, NCDOT has ignored decades of planning and information-gathering by the City of Asheville (sanctioned and funded by NCDOT) to develop a plan that favors motorized, high-speed through traffic over other modalities. On information and belief, NCDOT did not even obtain Level of Service data except for motorized vehicles. It ignored principles of NC's Zero Vision and Complete Streets policies as well as recommendations of City of Asheville including Asheville In Motion and Asheville City 2025 Plan. Guidelines of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), supposedly incorporated into NCDOT bicycle policy, and NCGS 20-150, were also ignored.

At the meeting, I was told that bicycles, far from having a bike lane or even a climbing lane, were to be "accommodated" by an extra two feet in the travel lane, for a total width of 13' for that lane. My comment that this was totally inadequate was met with a shrug and a statement that "we're trying to take bikes into account." My bicycle handlebars alone are wider than two feet, and the guidelines mentioned above suggest that 4 feet, not two, is a minimum safe width (not counting gutter). AASHTO guidelines suggest that lane widths of **14 feet or greater** allow cars to pass cyclists without encroaching into adjacent lanes.

I commute to work by bicycle from our home near UNCA to West Asheville (Covington Street) and feel generally safe, as I am on city streets where the City of Asheville has provided bike-friendly infrastructure such as bike lanes (Haywood and Hilliard), climbing lanes (Clingman), and "traffic calming." To get by bike to businesses on Merrimon, I make significant detours on adjacent side streets to minimize my travel time on Merrimon, which I view as extremely hazardous.

My family lives off Mount Clare—the intersection where an ART passenger disembarking from the bus was struck and killed by a car is just blocks from our house. Residents had been trying for decades to get a traffic light at that intersection, by the way. The Merrimon corridor in this project is used by many types of pedestrians: UNCA students, people (including families with children) going to and from Weaver Park and the greenway, transit users, and customers of the many businesses on Merrimon Avenue. Most sidewalks have no, or very little, buffer from the car traffic speeding by and often exceeding the current 35 mph speed limit. NCDOT's plan, which will make the road wider and straighter (thus encouraging higher vehicle speeds), and which is designed for a 40 mph speed limit, only increases the danger to pedestrians and cyclists.

I did not receive a satisfactory answer when I asked how a central turn lane—often called a "suicide lane"—was going to decrease congestion or increase safety for anybody, including drivers. The high number of adjacent business on Merrimon means that northbound and southbound traffic trying to turn left from that central lane will often come into conflict. My question as to the feasibility of dedicated left-turn-only lanes at designated intersections, with traffic lights and travel lanes (here I am picturing the Merrimon intersection across from Chick-Fil-A, which seems to work fine) was basically brushed aside. I get the impression that NCDOT is already invested in this one design and does not really welcome public input. I also question the short timeline, lack of alternatives, and cost of the project, and its disruption of local businesses and neighborhoods. NCDOT should take into account the extensive

research and planning already done by City of Asheville, and work closely with the city. Many improvements could be done incrementally with less disruption.

Michele Newton Dohse

– Michele Dohse, Five Points January 20, 2018

## **Five Points Neighborhood: Rather not see Merrimon Ave turn into another Hendersonville Road scenario**

From: **Jeff Farmer**

Date: Sat, Jan 20, 2018 at 4:13 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

Hi Kim,

I'd like to add my voice to those in opposition of the current widening plan for Merrimon Ave. I think there are better ways to improve this road. Ones that include pedestrians and cyclists, while also managing automobile traffic in a manner that reflects a positive multimodal area. As a resident of the 5 Points Neighborhood, I'd rather not see Merrimon Ave turn into another Hendersonville Road scenario. Where it feels more like a highway with stop lights rather than a neighborhood road. Also, of all the miles of sidewalks on Hendersonville Rd, rarely do I see anyone using them. I wouldn't either, it seems dangerous, and far less like a community. This plan also doesn't lend itself to any of the longer term plans set aside for Merrimon Ave by the City of Asheville and NCDOT, i.e., NCDOT Complete Street Policy, Asheville in Motion Plan, Asheville City 2025, just to name a few. There were also no alternative plans that would have been on track to support any of the above mentioned plans.

Please consider alternative plans.

Thank you,

~Jeff Farmer

President

5 Points Neighborhood Association

– Jeff Farmer, Five Points January 20, 2018

# **Chris: I'm writing as a local property owner to oppose the current DOT plan to widen N Merrimon**

From: **Christopher M. Craig**

Date: Sat, Jan 20, 2018 at 5:08 PM

Subject: Opposition to N Merrimon road widening wt Weaver to edgemont

To: "chood@ncdot.gov" <chood@ncdot.gov>

RE NC DOT Div 13, TIP numbers U5781 and U5782

I'm writing as a local property owner to oppose the current DOT plan to widen N Merrimon. The proposed plan would increase traffic speeds dangerously, making neighborhood pedestrian and bicycle use more difficult and less likely.

I would like to see a design that required slower automotive speeds, along with a divided cycling roadway, plus sidewalks.

Additionally, I would like to see a plan that continues the greenway under the road. In its current form, the greenway is extremely dangerous at the Merrimon crossing (and it takes along time to get across).

Chris Craig

– Chris Craig, Kenilworth January 20, 2018

# **Bess: While working on your revisions, please consult with the City of Asheville Transportation Dept. They understand Asheville's needs**

From: **Bess Baird**

Date: Thu, Jan 18, 2018 at 10:33 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Widening Project

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Kim~

Merrimon Ave is a heavily used north/south corridor. Several years ago, NCDOT upgraded Broadway to lighten the load from Merrimon. Some thought and energy devoted to encouraging motorists to use Broadway would alleviate some of the congestion on Merrimon.

I do have some concerns re the Merrimon Ave Widening Project. I will list some of them here:



\*Raising the speed limit to 40 mph.

\*Glenn's Creek Greenway at the intersection of WT Weaver Blvd is currently unsafe. What accommodations will be made for this popular Greenway?

\*Will there be designated crossing areas with "Walk/Don't Walk" lights for pedestrians?

\*A 2' bicycle lane is unsafe. The width of handle bars is about 2'. Therefore, cars and bikes will collide. That's a real safety issue!

\*Residents of Murdock Ave, a narrow street (after passing the park) with many small homes and young children will be impacted severely with the extra traffic that it would have to endure as a "cut through".

\*Norwood Park residents will have restrictions on their ability to travel locally from Merrimon Ave shops.

\*NCDOT funded, sat on the steering committee and ultimately reviewed and endorsed the City of Asheville Comprehensive Bicycle Plan. The needs identified for Merrimon in that plan are ignored.

\*There will be an impact on some homes and businesses. Please consider the low impact road connection for Clearview Terrace that takes no homes.

While working on your revisions, please consult with the City of Asheville Transportation Dept. They understand Asheville's needs.

I appreciate your efforts in developing plans for multimodal transportation for this and all future projects.

Thank you!

Bess Baird

January 18, 2018

## **George: Even though I live in Hendersonville I ride all over Asheville and Hendersonville on my bicycle**

From: **George Celtrick**

Date: Thu, Jan 18, 2018 at 5:16 PM

Subject: I Oppose the Merrimon Widening Project

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Even though I live in Hendersonville I ride all over Asheville and Hendersonville on my bicycle.

There will be bicycles on Merrimon long after the combustion engine driven car is gone.

Thinking about traffic flow in "combustion engine driven cars" needs will probably make the widening outdated by the time it's complete or shortly thereafter and is therefore wasteful.

I could weigh in on all the legalese and City intent documents, but that would be missing the bigger point – how and why we use cars is changing fast.

Hold off on this plan for now, please.

—  
Best,  
George  
Celtrick

– George Celtrick January 18, 2018

**Sam: We live here. This city is changing and the old paradigms need to change with it. Honestly, how many success stories from cities like Portland do you need?**

From: **Sam Yale**

Date: Wed, Jan 17, 2018 at 10:37 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

Kim Bereis,

I am writing to oppose the Merrimon Ave widening project as it has been proposed.

I own a home in West Asheville and have been a North Carolina resident for 3 years. Before the move, I lived in Portland Oregon where commuting by bicycle was easy and a common way of life. Developers and transportation authorities respected and worked closely with both the public and bicycle advocacy groups to ensure safe and fair infrastructure.

In as much as I wish I could commute more in Asheville, I am sorry to say that it is simply not safe to do so, and the Merrimon widening project, in its current proposal, is a reason why.

I am sure others will bring to your attention the potential for business loss, increased speeds on Merrimon, and complete lack of respect for the local community in the name of more traffic. And they are more than valid reasons to reconstruct the plan. But mine is much more focused:

Asheville has an embarrassingly low number of bike lanes, period. And the opportunities to widen lanes given the current landscape are few and far between. Yet with Merrimon, there is a huge opportunity to provide cyclists a safe corridor connecting the north and south.

With all due respect, allowing more cars to go faster up and down Merrimon is stupid because it puts pedestrian lives at higher risk when it could be doing the exact opposite. And the NCDOT knows better. Listen to the public you have ignored for the sake of business and profits. Listen to advocacy groups like Asheville on Bikes. We live here. This city is changing and the old paradigms need to change with it. Honestly, how many success stories from cities like Portland do you need?

Please do not continue with the widening as planned. You have a opportunity here.

Thank you for your time.  
Sam Yale DVM, CA  
Veterinarian

– Sam Yale, West Asheville Estates    January 17, 2018

## Virginia: NCDOT ... has me baffled, frustrated, and sad

From: **Bower, Virginia**

Date: Wed, Jan 17, 2018 at 6:41 PM

Subject: merrimon ave

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

Hi,

As a long-time resident of Asheville (23 years), I have seen many changes, some good, some not so much. The idea that NCDOT is planning to make of Merrimon Ave. an even more treacherous and trafficked road than it currently is has me baffled, frustrated, and sad. Do we really need another Hendersonville Hwy. in North Asheville? Are we trying to keep our charm—which is what supposedly accounts for the burgeoning tourist numbers—or are we trying to look like every other retail strip in America?

I would like to know why NCDOT has seemingly ignored the City of Asheville's plans for Merrimon that were thoughtfully conceived in terms of pedestrian safety (40mph?? Really? Whose "safety" do you have in mind? The metal monster who will be careening even faster down the wide and debauched lanes of Merrimon?) and in terms of bicycle traffic. Many bikes use Merrimon, and pedestrians use it at their own risk. Is there no concern for either of these travelers? Even though both have met fateful ends in trying to get down the avenue?

We used to be a kind city, full of unique beauty and charm. As we become more and more a tourist destination, we are killing the golden-egg laying goose! I used to be proud to be a resident of Asheville. How much more "change" can we stand before we've created a place that is no longer beautiful, no longer attractive—then who will fill all those lanes and need all those retaining walls along Merrimon Avenue?

Virginia Bower

Kenilworth Neighborhood

Asheville NC

– Viginia Bower, Kenilworth    January 17, 2018

# **Nicholas: Please reconsider project. There are other solutions for Merrimon that benefit the community as a whole**

From: **Nicholas Hasslock**

Date: Wed, Jan 17, 2018 at 11:36 AM

Subject: Merrimon ave.

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear official,

It is very important to keep the historic streets the way they are. The old trees and local environment have taken decades to establish. This is irreplaceable. Wider faster roads kill the life of a neighborhood area. We saw this happen to Caldwell St. in Brevard, nc. Thankfully they saved the the old trees although the beauty of the street is all but gone.

It's easy to see how traffic data suggest that these projects are needed. It's also easy to see HNTB needs jobs to stay in business, as we all do. Big business needs to start appreciating the small towns they impact. We are more than dollars and a project. We live here. Please consider beauty and history of this old throughway.

Faster traffic means less stops to local businesses funneling it to larger box stores outside of city limits where taxes are lost. I've seen study's. My step father is an architect and a planner. New urban studies show that wider faster sprawl diminishes returns for the city. Diluting neighborhood culture. Cutting people off from their once walkable neighborhoods.

Please reconsider project. There are other solutions for Merrimon that benefit the community as a whole.

Thank you for your time,

Nicholas H

– Nicholas Hasslock January 17, 2018

# **Bruce: I am writing to you to oppose the NCDOT proposed change to Merrimon Ave**

From: **Rev. Bruce S. Noll, HMN**

Date: Tue, Jan 16, 2018 at 3:13 PM

Subject: Merrimon Widening Project

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

Attn Kim Bereis,

I am writing to you to oppose the NCDOT proposed change to Merrimon Ave. As an 8 year resident of Asheville Primarily North Asheville and most recently Weaverville I have used Merrimon Ave almost daily since I moved here.

I object for the following reasons:

- 1) What I believe will be a negative impact on businesses during and after construction.
- 2) Pedestrian and cycling safety will be negatively impact due to increased speeds and narrower lanes.
- 3) Ignoring or avoiding the needs of local residents, city studies and recommendations and Federal guidelines for safety.
- 4) Alternates are not presented
- 5) Greenway projects are ignored or avoided

I am therefor requesting that the NCDOT do the following:

- 1) Partner with COA Department of Transportation plans – Asheville In Motion AIM
- 2) Refer to the Asheville City 2025 Plan
- 3) Consider the NCDOT Community Characteristics Report

or

- 4) Do nothing as this may be a better plan than the one being proposed.

Sincerely,

Bruce Noll

– Rev Bruce Knoll, North Asheville Community January 16, 2018

## **Georgeanna: NCDOT’s role as steward of transportation infrastructure gives it the responsibility to plan, fund, and design complete street networks**

From: **Georgeanna Connors**

Date: Sun, Jan 14, 2018 at 9:38 PM

Subject: Re: Merrimon Ave, Edgewood -> WT Weaver

To: kbereis@hntb.com

The NC DOT’s role as steward of transportation infrastructure gives it the responsibility to plan, fund, and design “complete street networks that sustain mobility while accommodating walking, biking, and transit opportunities safely.”

However, the current plans for Merrimon Ave are car-centric, short-sighted, environmentally reckless, and uninspired.

They’re also bad for business, both local and tourism. As you may already know, there’s [a compelling body of research](#) that shows bike lanes are good for business. They also create a

clear way for cars, bikes and pedestrians to interact, which dramatically reduces accidents and conflict.

I would challenge you to study this area as a major growth sector in the city and consider how it can be safer, more environmentally friendly, and even more profitable with the addition of more amenities for bikes and pedestrians.

Thank you,  
Georgeanna

– Georgeanna Connors January 14, 2018

## **Mary: We moved to North Asheville from South Asheville to avoid that big city feel – all the pavement and higher traffic speeds**

From: Mary Johnson

Date: Sat, Jan 13, 2018 at 1:49 PM

Subject: PLEASE DO NOTHING TO MERRIMON AVE THAT INHIBITS PEDESTRIANS AND BIKERS

To: kberies@hntb.com, ashevilleonbikes@gmail.com

Hello. I was unable to attend the meeting about the potential widening to five lanes parts of Merrimon Ave. This has come up just as I AM THINKING WE SHOULD LOWER THE SPEED LIMIT on this stretch. We moved to North Asheville from South Asheville to avoid that big city feel – all the pavement and higher traffic speeds. I am sure that You know that turning a road into FIVE lanes, with NO MEDIAN, is going to add speed. Why do we need speed – I travel this way almost daily and have never once experienced a backup like happens all the time on Hendersonville Rd. Nobody has to travel that short 1-2 miles any faster than they already do. Plenty of drivers already feel unsafe with the speed on Merrimon Ave.. The drivers who switch lanes and try to get ahead that way frequently do not. They just make the road more unsafe for all of us. I suggest you make one lane in each direction with a turning lane and wider sidewalks (with green space between them and the road would be best)..... It is a very short stretch of road with numerous parking lots with vehicles pulling out – cars going faster would certainly create a monster of a situation. If drivers don't like the speed of Merrimon Ave, let them go over to 19-23.

I purchased a battery assist bike with two big bike bags several years ago when living in Biltmore Forest. There is almost NOWHERE to bike safely in the city. There is just NO excuse for this. There are so many Asheville residents who are just raring to bike but street safety stands in our way. Spend the money on making biking, like in other countries, a safe way to travel downtown. Wouldn't it be nice to see families biking downtown – safely!?!? I would absolutely LOVE for that to happen. We can do it, with the right direction!

Many years back, I heard a DOT representative speak to a concerned crowd about the widening of Long Shoals Road. He was actually trying to educate residents and businesses about how much safer it would be to add a green median to Long Shoals Road instead of a turn lane that would make the road five lane. But, outspoken businesses said it would hurt them and the one biker was looking pretty lonely up there... I wish I would have spoken up..... Many folks now wish they would have spoken up to agree to a green median. We MUST work harder to keep the Asheville feeling and character alive. Please!

Thanks. Mary Johnson

– Mary Johnson, Grove Park/Sunset January 13, 2018

## **Adam: I am writing to express disapproval of the Merrimon Ave widening as proposed**

From: **Adam Charnack**

Date: Sat, Jan 13, 2018 at 3:40 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave, Asheville

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Hi!

I am writing to express disapproval of the Merrimon Ave widening as proposed.

In short, I agree that Merrimon Ave should be widened both in the stretch that's contemplated and throughout the much more of the corridor.

However, it should be widened to be *rationalized* to coincide with the hard work the City of Asheville is attempting to complete pursuant to making itself a more livable city. Such rationalized improvements should include: (1) street parking throughout the entire corridor, (2) having sidewalks on both sides of the street, and (3) bike lanes – ideally buffered – wherever possible...in addition to 3 or 4 lanes of auto traffic.

The City of Asheville is working hard to improve itself, yet it cannot do so with our commercial corridors configured as the currently as, that is devoted almost entirely to moving automobiles laterally rapidly.

Thank you for your consideration.

—

Adam Charnack

– Adam Charnack January 13, 2018

# **Claudia: Although I am a seasoned bicyclist I avoid riding this section of road because there is no room for bicyclists on the roadway**

From: Claudia Nix

Date: Sat, Jan 13, 2018 at 1:54 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave proposed changes

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Hello Kim,

I was unable to attend the public meeting last Monday but do want to comment on this project. I have a number of concerns about this project. First, it does not seem to be taking pedestrians and bicyclists into consideration with the proposed changes. There are many people walking this corridor and there are many present challenges for their safety. There are sections where sidewalk ends and leaves no place for the pedestrian to continue walking, there are locations where trying to cross the street is difficult now and by adding a turn lane will make the roadway wider and increase the time for people to get across the street. There are sections when turning traffic and pedestrians are moving at the same time and motorists do not yield to them. Second, although I am a seasoned bicyclist I avoid riding this section of road because there is no room for bicyclists on the roadway and there are so many vehicles that are vying for space and with the preoccupation of cell phones and other things motorists are not looking for bicyclists. It would be much safer for those on the sidewalks and for those who need to bike to locations on this roadway if a turn lane was put in by reducing the number of motor vehicle lanes and adding bike lanes on each direction. This would give a buffer to the pedestrians and a place for the bicyclists to travel. Fourth, I travel this road many times in my motor vehicle and I understand the issue with motorists having difficult traveling along this road, however I feel that congestion is not always a negative factor. There are times when this roadway is free moving and I fear that adding additional lanes will increase the speed that motorists travel. On Hendersonville Road, which I travel daily we find motorists traveling 50-60 mph. This is a deadly travel speed if a motorists hits a pedestrian. Merrimon Avenue maybe a numbered state roadway but it is also a local collector street; increasing the speed of motor vehicles does not need to be achieved. Continual flow is more important than increasing speed. Completing the sidewalk connections is the most important need of this roadway and I applaud the willingness to do this. Fifth, there is a very important crossing of a local greenway at WT Weaver Blvd. This is a difficult crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists because the crossing light is green for them at the same time the left turn light is green for motorists turning from Weaver onto Merrimon. This intersection needs correction. Also, the side walk is very narrow and there is a 3" drop-off on the far side (the



Luella's side). This can be difficult for bicyclists to negotiate when trying to continue on the greenway. Widening the side walk would help with this problem.

I believe these suggestions are very important to make our community bicycle and pedestrian friendly. The city has been recognized as a bronze level bicycle friendly community and silver level as a pedestrian friendly community. We are trying to improve these classifications and I feel these suggestions would help us with these efforts. The NCDOT proposed changes would hinder these efforts. I hope you will take this information all into consideration and incorporate them into the DOT plan rather than continue as is.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

Claudia Nix

Co-owner Liberty Bicycles, Inc.

– Claudia Nix, Kenilworth January 13, 2018

## **Susan: I am asking that NCDOT consider additional alternatives for the Merrimon Avenue widening project**

From: **Susan Bean**

Date: Sat, Jan 13, 2018 at 2:50 PM

Subject: Comments on Merrimon Avenue widening project

To: kbereis@hntb.com

As a resident of North Asheville who lives less than 1 block off Merrimon Avenue and just north of the Edgewood Rd. intersection, I am asking that NCDOT consider additional alternatives for the Merrimon Avenue widening project.

While I appreciate that the current plan will provide a much needed pedestrian sidewalk on the west side of the road, I also think that other interests for pedestrians, cyclists, and area residents should be taken into account. This project seems to fully ignore the city of Asheville's years of planning for ways the Merrimon avenue corridor could better support the needs of local travelers. In particular, improvements to the safety of the greenway crossing at the W.T. Weaver intersection should be more thoughtfully incorporated into the plans.

I ask that NCDOT consult with the City staff who have invested in planning for this corridor to propose alternative options for infrastructure improvements to this stretch of road.

Thanks,

Susan Bean

– Susan Bean, North Asheville Community January 13, 2018

# Eben: I support Asheville On Bikes and oppose the Merrimon Avenue widening project

From: **Eben Henner**

Date: Fri, Jan 12, 2018 at 12:42 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue widening project

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

Hello. I support Asheville On Bikes and oppose the Merrimon Avenue widening project. More pavement and faster car speeds are not the solutions we need for our already over crowded city. We need to encourage and endorse alternative modes of transportation by making greenways a priority. On a global level, we need to discourage the use of environment polluting automobiles and start making bike and foot travel more attractive for everyone. This plan only discourages that. For the sake of the planet, we need to change our ways.

Thanks

Eben Henner

– Eben Henner January 12, 2018

# Nick: I wanted to ... express strong opposition to the proposed plans

From: **Nick Kroncke**

Date: Fri, Jan 12, 2018 at 7:12 PM

Subject: Merrimon Widening Feedback

To: "kbereis@hntb.com" <kbereis@hntb.com>

To NCDOT and whom it may concern,

As a citizen and professional in the City of Asheville I wanted to submit feedback for this project and **express strong opposition to the proposed plans**. The Division 13 plans do not follow the Complete Streets policy adopted by the City as well as the NCDOT Complete Street policy. The widening will increase motor vehicle speeds on this road and discourage active transportation, which is directly against the goals of NCDOT and the municipality. Allowing 2-3 feet of a shared lane does not count as a cyclist friendly street. Please consider reviewing Asheville in Motion and Asheville City 2025 plans for recommendations, and understand how significant of a corridor for all forms of transit Merrimon Ave is.

I advise NCDOT to follow AASHTO standards for active transportation and give the minimum width of 4 feet for cyclists. Couldn't the proposed plan be changed to allow at least 4 feet for cyclists in each direction of Merrimon?

Please know that the City, citizens of the city, and professionals who work in the field feel strongly opposed to this plan and that their concerns are valid and should be addressed further. At the minimum please take longer to design alternatives to this widening effort. If this plan goes through, Asheville will lose any chance of becoming a truly connected city.

I would appreciate a response addressing any and all concerns addressed here.

Thank you,

Nick Kroncke

– Nick Kroncke January 12, 2018

## **Brooke: Of no value to me to put my fellow Asheville residents at risk to save a minute while riding in my car**

From: Brooke Heaton

Date: Fri, Jan 12, 2018 at 1:35 PM

Subject: Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard – promote sustainable and safe communities

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Dear Ms. Bereis,

Thank you for taking the time to ready my email.

I am writing to express my concern that current plans for the Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements at Edgewood through WT Weaver Boulevard will prevent specific safety risks to pedestrians and bicyclists, do not promote healthy, walkable communities and deviate strongly from the NCDOT's own 2009 Complete Streets policy, the City of Asheville Comprehensive Bicycle Plan. Further, the plans ignore AASHTO Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, which was adopted via NCDOT's own Bicycle Policy. As a resident of Asheville who moved here because it offers so many healthy alternatives to large cities, I am dismayed by the lack of collaboration and coordination with existing local plans that the Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements plan reveals.

I strongly encourage NCDOT's Division 13 to work with the City of Asheville's (COA) Transportation Department to incorporate COA plans into NCDOT planning for Merrimon Avenue. Exhaustive efforts by numerous Asheville residents and groups have gone into the formulation of the Asheville in Motion (AIM), and the Asheville City 2025 Plan. Further, please consider specific considerations of the NCDOT's "Community Characteristics Report, US 25 (Merrimon Ave) King Street to Maney Avenue: Operational Improvements City of Asheville, Buncombe County (CCR)" which expressly raises the need for specialized trail crossings at

W.T. Weaver and references the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan's desire for climbing lanes in the area, which are excluded from the current plans. I also strongly encourage NCDOT Division 13 to follow the NCDOT Transportation Policy regarding active transportation, which expressly focuses on the need to work "in partnership with local government agencies, interest groups, and the public to plan, fund, design, construct, and manage complete street networks that sustain mobility while accommodating walking, biking, and transit opportunities safely".

I will note that, while I am a sometimes biker, I am a frequent driver in Asheville use Merrimon Avenue extensively. It is entirely of no value to me to put my fellow Asheville residents at risk to save a minute while riding in my car. I have more patience and consideration for the needs and value of two-legged and two-wheeled travelers than this plan conveys. It is FAR more important that I live in a city and community that thrives on healthy, active, living by building infrastructure that prioritizes the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists over cars. Nowhere in the Merrimon Ave Intersection Improvements plans do I see a genuine concern for the local community, pedestrians, bicyclists or the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please work with the City of Asheville and local citizen groups to revise your plans to promote a walkable, bikeable and sustainable Asheville community.

Sincerely,

Brooke Randall Heaton

– Brooke Heaton, West Asheville Estates January 12, 2018

## **Jennifer: We have two teen groups that meet here every week. The kids walk on Merrimon to get lunch. It's already hard to cross**

From: **Jennifer Murphy**

Date: Tue, Jan 30, 2018 at 2:08 PM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue expansion

To: [chood@ncdot.gov](mailto:chood@ncdot.gov), [mgclark@ncdot.gov](mailto:mgclark@ncdot.gov)

I'm writing to make an official comment on the proposed changes on Merrimon Ave in Asheville. I work several times a week in the North Asheville Rec Center, a block away from Merrimon on East Larchmont Road. I feel that these changes would negatively impact my life and the others who use the North Asheville Rec Center.

We have two teen groups that meet here every week. The kids walk on Merrimon to get lunch. It's already hard to cross. This will make it much worse. We have several volunteers who ride their bikes to our space. A 2' wide bike lane is a joke!

These changes are not designed for people, only for cars. I think they will not only endanger pedestrians and cyclists but also hurt local businesses. It will be harder to pull in and out of

parking lots at places like Luellas, Yolo, and Jus Running. This is not a highway, this is a city street. Future plans should be slowing down the traffic, making it better for walkers and bikes, not speeding it up.

Please scrap this plan and come up with something that is appropriate for humans.

Jennifer Murphy

Asheville 28806

– Jennifer Murphy, North Asheville Community

## **Pat: This is an UNACCEPTABLE road planning design!**

From: **Pat Robbins**

Date: Mon, Jan 29, 2018 at 10:05 AM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue expansion project

To: kbereis@hntb.com

My name is Patricia M. Robbins and I am writing as a concerned citizen to express my opposition to the NCDOT project to expand Merrimon Avenue in Asheville!! My 26 year old daughter lives off of Merrimon Avenue and I own a home in Waynesville, NC. I travel into Asheville to see my daughter, shop at local businesses, eat at the many wonderful restaurants and attend music/artistic events 3-5 times per week. Asheville is a vibrant city where I have been considering the purchase of a home.

The reasons that I oppose the Merrimon Avenue project are, as follows:-It will result in closure of local businesses.

-The expansion design is based ONLY on accommodating cars; with NO aspect of planning to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians! In a city already overwhelmed with traffic and congestion from cars, this is an UNACCEPTABLE road planning design! My husband spent his 35 year career as an Urban/Transportation Planner for the NYSDOT. His specific role and responsibility was to assure accommodation for cyclists and pedestrians in any engineering design of both new and expansion planning for highways.

The recently completed Route 209, Waynesville highway project is another example where there was NO accommodation for bike lanes! I am a member of a Haywood County cycling group and know that many of the long rides and cycling commuter use are alone that corridor of Route 209. It is disgraceful that an opportunity existed to designate safe bike lanes on this Route 209 project and it didn't happen!!

-Again regarding Merrimon Avenue... the expansion of this road will result in cars going even faster than they already do, resulting in greater risk for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists!!

-The City of Asheville has spent money and implemented zoning changes on Merrimon that are being disregarded in the NCDOT design for expansion! This is unacceptable!

There are many, many other planning -based reasons why this expansion is unnecessary and will, in fact, be highly detrimental to pedestrians, local businesses and the neighborhoods off Merrimon Avenue!

I urge the NCDOT to abandon the Merrimon Avenue expansion project and work collaboratively with the City of Asheville to design a project that is safe, accommodates pedestrians and does not create yet another dangerous and unnecessary expansion of roads vs. planning for PEOPLE!!

Thank you,  
Patricia M. Robbins  
– Patricia Robbins

## **Mary: I support instead, a three lane, two lanes plus turning lane, design**

From: **Mary Fierle**

Date: Fri, Jan 19, 2018 at 11:20 AM

Subject: Merrimon Avenue, Asheville NC

To: kbereis@hntb.com

Kim,

I drive on Merrimon Avenue almost every day. It is my neighborhood. I strongly oppose a five lane solution to this corridor! I believe this is a very backwards thinking design.

I support instead, a three lane, two lanes plus turning lane, design. Also, an addition of wider sidewalks and a decent bike lane. So many people live just one block east and west of Merrimon, and we would all walk and bike more were it safer to do so.

In addition, I support a slower speed limit.

I plead with NC DOT to listen to our community on this issue. Please!

Thank you.

—

Mary Fierle  
AIA Asheville