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Subject:	[External] Agenda Item for Wednesday - Hill St. -> Broadway
Date:	Monday, January 22, 2018 3:03:31 PM
Attachments:	Riverside Dr. - Sample Section.pdf

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Dear MMTC Members –

I am writing regarding your agenda item on Wednesday on the greenway/multi-use path opportunities between Hill Street and Broadway.

I believe the AECOM survey was incomplete in not identifying the opportunity to pursue both a multi-use path along Riverside Drive as well as a greenway focused on the river's edge.

I encourage you to adopt a resolution on Wednesday advising staff and Council to pursue both as separate, independent projects.

Riverside Drive is set to be rebuilt in 2020 by NC DOT under project # U-5868 within the recently-adopted State Transportation Improvement Plan. (https://www.ncdot.gov/strategictransportationinvestments/2018-2027.htm) When projects reach this stage, they are already funded and very likely to happen on schedule. As I have heard it, this project is on a firm timeline because it must happen in advance of the I-26 construction, thus adding to its certainty. It is being planned and designed now. There may be a brief window of opportunity now to get DOT's agreement to include facilities for bikes and pedestrians in the project. (Note that DOT does not routinely nor automatically include bike/ped facilities in their projects.) City staff could and should be at the table advising DOT as to design. DOT including bike/ped facilities here means DOT would design them, acquire ROW for them, and construct them. It may also be that local funds equaling only 40% of construction materials for the bike/ped facilities could be required, per DOT policy. This could be very inexpensive for the City, especially if funding partnerships are sought with TDA and perhaps others. It should be the policy of City government that anytime a DOT project occurs in the city, the best possible complete streets treatment should be included. Pursuing this opportunity does not preclude the opportunity for a greenway focused on the river's edge.

There is a lot of current discussion about proper design of bike/ped facilities in the DOT project. Attached is one concept.

Because the window of opportunity for the City to engage with DOT may be short given the project timeline, I urge the MMTC to adopt a resolution Wednesday advising staff and Council to very actively pursue a partnership with NCDOT for quality bike-ped facilities in this project.

After DOT rebuilds Riverside Dr., it would be very very difficult or impossible to have additional bike/ped facilities built in the corridor either as a local project or in partnership with

DOT.

A future greenway – aligned as much as possible along the river – should also be pursued as well. Because it would be outside the DOT right of way, DOT would not consider including a separated greenway as part of the Riverside Dr. project. It would be a local project like all our other greenway projects to date. Given the realities of ramping up to design, acquiring property, finding funding, etc., and given the other existing greenway priorities, it might have to happen on a different timeline than the DOT project. The coming update to the greenways master plan might be the ideal time to prioritize this greenway project.

I'll note that the AECOM study highlights how there may be opportunities to have the greenway run along the river's edge for some portions, and then run in the DOT right-of-way for others. Should a multi-use path be constructed by DOT on the east side of Riverside Dr., there could be the opportunity for the locally built greenway to tie to it and/or rely on it at various intervals where routing along the river is less feasible. Likewise, if the DOT road rebuild does not include it a multi-use path, it could be impossible to add anything in the road ROW later.

In any event, once the City begins to design the greenway project, it would be free to consider (or not) any of the recommendations in the AECOM study - a study which provides guidance but is not binding.

So I would encourage that the resolution you adopt Wednesday also include an endorsement for moving ahead with prioritization of this local greenway project.

Given the lack of clarity of the AECOM study and the ongoing confusion about what the opportunities are, I think it all the more important that the MMTC adopt the suggested resolutions. I do not see this discussion or decision-making as being a choice between either a greenway or a multi-use path. I think we can and should choose both as separate distinct projects, and your Wednesday meeting will provide an opportunity to clarify that.

Thank you for your service.

Marc Hunt