

RE: [External] I-26 Connector Project Comments

From: Robbins, Jamille A <jarobbins@ncdot.gov>
To: Tarleton Walmsley <gardenpartyavl@gmail.com>
Sent: January 2, 2019 12:48:44 PM EST

Mr. Walmsley,

First of all, I want to start by apologizing for any rude behavior by any staff member. That is uncalled for and unprofessional. Additional training seems to be warranted.

With that said, thank you for your comments on this very important and complicated project. I will forward your comments to the Project Team for discussion and inclusion in the public record.

If I may be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

From: Tarleton Walmsley <gardenpartyavl@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 2, 2019 11:37 AM
To: Robbins, Jamille A <jarobbins@ncdot.gov>
Subject: [External] I-26 Connector Project Comments

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Mr. Robbins,

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments, as well as those of others in our community, regarding the I-26 Connector project.

I'd like to start by commenting on the last public meeting, and the behavior of the DOT staff. I realize you've been working on this project for a long time, and that with it comes a lot of agitation and negativity from folks that disagree with the scope of the project. That being said, the hostility and condescension I was met with from three different DOT employees when I tried to ask questions was unnecessary, and quite frankly rude. The community here in Asheville has every right to ask whatever questions they need to, since most of us will be greatly impacted. We'll be losing our homes and businesses, and I would ask that the DOT staff considers this when they are communicating with the community. I'd wager that if their homes and businesses were on the line, they'd behave much differently. I also want to note that at the meeting, you asked us to follow the golden rule. At one point in the evening, a man was speaking about the volume and sound pollution that will happen because of this project, and one of your DOT staff yelled from the back at him as he was talking. In the future, should there be any other similar meetings I hope that your staff can abide by the same rules you ask of us.

All of that being said, I was able to speak at the event, and it should be no surprise that I disagree with the current scope of this project. I have lived in West Asheville for 9 years, and in August of 2018 I opened a business at 474 Haywood Road, location of the Meadows Dry Goods shop. When we moved into the building, we knew that the fate of its existence would likely be compromised, but we did not anticipate our city and county leaders voting to fast track the plans. This isn't our forever home--we know that. But I am concerned for what the project will do to my neighborhood.

This section of Haywood Rd has been revitalized so much in just the last year, and it will continue to grow until it's demolished. So far, on our block I know of six businesses (including my own) that have opened within the last year. Not all of these six businesses will have to move, but I mention them because it would be detrimental to all of us should this highway plow through our neighborhood. We've all worked hard to "make it" in Asheville, and opening a

business here is often the best way to "get ahead" and survive in a city that is increasingly less concerned with the its citizens that actually live here, as it is with the tourists that visit. The landscape of Haywood Road will forever change, and I disagree with the nature of this project in its attempt to literally demolish the livelihoods and homes of so many.

I know change is inevitable, but I would ask that the DOT reconsider its methods and this project's current iteration. Even from an environmental perspective, I disagree with the scale at which you're trying to insert a giant highway. There are certainly issues with traffic here that need to be addressed, but building a giant highway isn't going to alleviate that so much as it is going to ruin the lives of many, ruin the landscape of our town, and ultimately outdate itself quickly. There are new innovations and environmentally-concerned constructs that should be considered before opting for an outdated method.

And now, for a bit of information about our building. We house at least 12 different businesses in this building, and the history of this building is unique to West Asheville. This building operated as a dry goods shop for many years. On Saturdays, people would gather in the building for community-building gatherings. When the shop closed, the upstairs was rented to area artists and small businesses. We continue to chat with customers that remember this building in its first iteration. Their stories are rich with history and remembrance. And in many ways, this building has helped foster the lives and businesses of many, as they begin their entrepreneurial endeavors. That includes my business. I would not like to prematurely evacuate my businesses in its beginning stages, as I am sure the many people and businesses effected by this project would not like to have to evacuate their homes and businesses either.

I implore you and the DOT to reconsider your plans. They do not serve the community of Asheville, and I am adamantly opposed to this project.

Thank you for your time.

Tarleton Walmsley

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Tarleton Walmsley

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