

Staff Report for Planning and Zoning Board



Meeting Date: June 19, 2017

Cary Parkway Extension Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Purpose: Conduct a public hearing on proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment to remove NE Cary Parkway extension and other related segments

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Speaker: Juliet Andes, Transportation & Facilities

Executive Summary: To help keep Cary great, we are continuously evaluating the current state to ensure that what we are doing and how we are doing it makes sense for our community in today's complex and ever-changing world. The standard we now measure against is the Town Council's blueprint for our future, the Imagine Cary Community Plan, which was adopted on January 24, 2017. During that process, staff advised Council that we would be continuing to look at several issues, including a decades-old proposed extension of the NE Cary Parkway through SAS, and conducting scientific studies to determine whether 'legacy' items such as this remain appropriate. To this end, the Town has completed an evaluation of the larger context and researched the history, and we, in partnership with SAS, hired a professional traffic consultant to conduct a traffic analysis, which is included in the staff report. Based on that analysis, staff is recommending several changes to the Plan, including the removal of the NE Cary Parkway extension.

Recommendation: *That Planning and Zoning Board conduct a public hearing on this proposed amendment to the Cary Community Plan that removes the NE Cary Parkway extension and other related road segments from the Plan. Following the public hearing, staff recommends Planning and Zoning Board forward a recommendation to the Town Council for final action on July 27, 2017.*

Background: Cary has long been a leader in planning for and implementing an efficient transportation system as mobility in and around Town is a priority for our citizens. Effective ways to achieve greater mobility in our community include having a transportation network that seeks to mitigate traffic congestion wherever possible and ensures safety is maximized for all users.

The Imagine Cary Community Plan recognizes that external influences and trends impact decisions about the transportation network. The MOVE Chapter, in particular, discusses mobility trends and the chapter policies provide transportation direction to guide future decision-making. Policy 4 in MOVE recognizes that Cary will need to "maximize transportation investments by focusing on the highest need areas and places where targeted investments will yield significant benefits." This direction was reinforced in the Town Manager's recent budget Work Session on May 4, 2017 suggesting that the Town look for "zombie projects" that may have been planned for years, while recognizing that new initiatives and changing priorities may now mean that they will no longer be of value relative to other projects that have may serve a greater need to all Cary citizens.

Another theme discussed in the Imagine Cary Community Plan included a shift in per capita vehicle miles traveled. While much of the decrease can be explained by the 2008 economic downturn and increases in gas prices, per capita vehicle miles traveled peaked in 2005 before the recession and have not fully rebounded since the recession ended. This trend, coupled with advancing technology in areas like autonomous vehicles offer yet another

reason to review and question how we plan for transportation in the future.

Cary developed its first Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) in 2001. Prior to that time, Cary's roadway planning was guided by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Area's (CAMPO) Thoroughfare Plan for the region, adopted in 1967 and 1997. Cary's 2001 transportation planning effort was the first time in the Town's history a comprehensive approach to planning was incorporated that emphasized all modes of transportation: roadway, bicycle, pedestrian and transit. This 30 year vision set the framework for transportation policy in Cary and helped shape the Town's infrastructure during the peak of Cary's rapid growth. Cary updated the CTP in 2008 and again through the Imagine Cary planning process, periodically revisiting traffic model projections based on land use development, updated population and employment data and projected growth and development.

The 2001 "legacy" plan included the NE Cary Parkway extension recommendation, a carryover recommendation from the 1997 CAMPO plan. The extension was planned as a future 2-lane road with right-of-way reservation for 6 lanes and the path of the extension primarily on SAS-owned property. The extension proposes to connect the existing Cary Parkway at N. Harrison Avenue and extend east beyond Trinity Road to connect to Raleigh. It is important to note that the proposed expansion would be incumbent upon the primary land holder, SAS, to develop the land and build the roadway extension. To date, SAS has expressed no intention to develop this land. While the proposed extension has existed on the Town's transportation plan since 2001, the proposed plan never warranted project funding as part of the Town's budget process or through regional funding sources.

