

Questions and Answers Concerning Estes Drive Improvements

1) I understand that the funding for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is not fixed. Is this correct?

The project is still in the planning phase and moving forward. You are correct that state matching funding is not yet appropriated and federal funding is dependent on local and state funding reaching a specific % of project cost. Federal funding is also not guaranteed due to a number of other competing projects with similar “scores” on the evaluation criteria.

The Traffic Impact Analysis should not reduce future traffic in anticipation of BRT. The TIA does not include BRT traffic reduction, just a local transit service trip reduction of 10% – which is high given the very limited service on Estes.

2) No one has discussed the impact of BRT vehicles on traffic on MLK. Will there be dedicated bus lanes and turnouts at bus stops?

Yes, there will be a dedicated BRT lane on each side of MLK for the area that includes the Estes intersection.

How will the capacity of MLK for non-BRT vehicles be impacted by BRT?

Yes and no. It will depend on the portion of MLK you are talking about. The answer is “no impact” for the area around the Estes/MLK intersection.

How is this accounted for in the various traffic models? Should it be?

BRT is not included in any models. It depends on the time frame being modeled. BRT service will not start before 2025 at the very earliest.

3) Does the ‘talked about’ improvements at the Estes-MLK intersection have committed funding and a committed start date?

Yes, the DOT funding has been secured by the Town as is the Town funding component (80/20 as I recall). Project goes to bid any time now. Our concern is that recent bids have exceeded project estimates and thus may come in higher than available funding (project has been around a long time).

If not, then anticipated improvements at the intersection shouldn't be used to make the situation look better than it is.

Expected construction start is Fall this year.

4) The traffic impact study should show worst case, not just mean or average levels of service to illustrate what residents are actually experiencing.

Agreed. This is a fundamental flaw of the Town's 2001 "Guidelines for Traffic Impact Analysis" specification that is still used for all significant development projects. The Town is aware of the flaw and there are plans to update it.

5) How long will construction, and traffic disruption at the Estes-MLK intersection, take. {Note the construction of a traffic circle at the Carrboro end of Estes Extension has been underway and disrupting traffic for over a year.}

There are 3 likely phases of traffic disruption: stacking lanes and side path/sidewalks, Aura project, and finally BRT lanes and boarding facilities. Best guess at this point will be from Fall 2021 thru Fall 2025.

6) The TIA done for Aura uses a 4 year timeframe for accessing traffic growth. That is too short, particularly as the State apparently has no near term plans to widen Estes. Given this limitation, what is the Town Council doing to develop options?

The TIA Guidelines require traffic projection only for 2 years beyond date of occupancy permit. This is assumed to be 4 years from now. As to Council options, good question.

7) The Aura plan showed bike and pedestrian pathways along the Estes frontage. Is the developer fully responsible for the construction?

No, the construction in front of Aura is part of a joint DOT/Town project, along with the new stacking lanes. Aura just provides the land.

To what do these pathways connect - or do they end at the Aura property line?

The sidewalks and pathway will run along both sides of Estes and run from MLK to Caswell.

Does the town have a plan to extend them all along Estes?

The Town plan continues the path across the front of both schools ending at the Caswell./Estes stop light. During the Central West discussions the option of continuing an eastward bike path along Clayton or Elliott was discussed. The goal of connectivity will not be achieved until the Town funds a plan to extend pedestrian and bike paths along Estes or these other options.

8) Data for the Aura traffic study was taken in January 2020 before Azalea Estates was occupied. Azalea has 140+ apartments, plus there are staff and deliveries for maintenance and serving 3 meals a day to residents. Huntington Somerset has 45 homes. Thus traffic entering and exiting Somerset onto Estes could well be doubled or tripled and may change the analysis of the need for signal or traffic circle at the intersection.

Azalea Estates was modeled using data from the IEEE Traffic Handbook in the same fashion as the Aura development traffic is modeled. Thus Azalea Estates was modeled as if it was fully functional. As such, there is still insufficient traffic to warrant a stop signal or traffic circle at Somerset/Estes.