

**STIP Project No. U-5781 and U-5782  
Proposed Intersection Improvements - Merrimon Avenue**

**DETAILED COMMENT SHEET**

**January 29, 2018**

**NAME:** Ken Putnam, PE, Director of the Transportation Department (City of Asheville)

**ADDRESS:** PO Box 7148, Asheville, NC 28802

**E-MAIL:** [kputnam@ashevillenc.gov](mailto:kputnam@ashevillenc.gov)

**COMMENTS and/or QUESTIONS:** The below detailed comments are supplemental to the [City of Asheville Comments to NCDOT Proposed Project document](#) that requests NCDOT to provide alternative concepts that align with city goals and adopted plans and that safely accommodate all users, especially those most vulnerable.

**General/Overarching Comments**

1. Consistent with both City and State goals relating to multimodal transportation and safety, Asheville is not in support of the project as proposed and requests alternative design concepts that integrate safety, mobility, and improved urban design.
2. The northern limit of the project. This project was conceived as two independent intersection improvements, and morphed into a 0.6 mile road widening project. While there are valid reasons for this change, it results in a northern terminus at an illogical mid-block location. Consider extending the project (whether it is within the existing roadway or involves widening) north to the existing widened section at Gracelyn Road. Left turns are a problem in this two-block section, including high volumes at McDonald's, the Post Office, and Larchmont Road. To end the bicycle lanes at the currently proposed terminus at Asheville Pizza does not appear to be a safe alternative as it would transition back to the current configuration along a long hill that begins at Murdoch and continues until Gracelyn, where the hill crests. The design should not force bicyclists who have pedaled up most of the hill to merge into a busy 35-mph traffic lane. If additional funding is required to extend the scope, that discussion would be an appropriate and preferred step than to design an unsafe condition.
3. Considering the project scope that transformed from two intersection into a half-mile streetscape project, the design should consider other possible connections with the greater corridor to have in place a framework for future improvement of multimodal facilities and neighborhood enhancements.
4. Historic Resources staff have concerns about the project and its impact on historic structures on the corridor and would like to see the historic structures survey when it is complete before making further comment on the project.

### **Process-Related Comment**

1. As a project that is occurring with the City of Asheville along a particularly significant corridor, the City of Asheville requests to be at the table with the design team to ensure expeditious design review that meets community expectations, community plans and City Council goals.

### **Design Speed**

1. Consistent with the intent of NCDOT's Vision Zero Resolution and Complete Streets Policy, Asheville requests maximum design speeds to not exceed 35 mph.

### **Transit-Related Comments**

1. Accommodations for a bus stop and shelter should be included on eastbound WT Weaver near the Merrimon intersection. This would require extending a short section of sidewalk on the south side of WT Weaver to the new bus stop location. This bus stop is necessary because currently transit riders who wish to head toward downtown Asheville (inbound) must get on the bus headed westbound and ride to the UNCA campus.

### **Traffic Operations**

1. Instead of restricting turning movements onto Woodward Avenue, use a stop control for Murdock Ave northbound to allow the free flow of traffic coming onto Woodward Avenue and into the Norwood residential district from Merrimon Avenue.

### **Greenway Connection**

1. Connection to Glenn's Creek Greenway should be in compliance with best practices.

### **Safety and Access-Related Comments**

1. In the Asheville Standards, Specifications and Details Manual, the sidewalk standard is for a 5-foot buffer from the street and a 5-foot sidewalk. In a constrained setting when a sidewalk must be at the back of curb the minimum width is 6 feet. In some sections, the proposed 5 foot sidewalk will be adjacent to a retaining wall and the travel lane, which creates an uninviting environment for pedestrians and should be wider.
2. Access management should be considered as part of the design. The project should aim to limit the number and width of driveway openings to reduce conflicts for vehicles and pedestrians. We've noted approximately seven driveways that should be investigated further for possible closure. In addition, some median sections could limit left turn conflicts, improving safety and traffic operations.
3. Short medians should be considered for use as pedestrian refuge islands wherever possible. One good location for a pedestrian refuge island is on the north side of the WT Weaver intersection where there is no need for a southbound left turn lane. This refuge island should be consistent with national (NACTO) [best practices](#) as this is both a pedestrian and bicycle gateway that connects to the Glenn's Creek Greenway.

4. In relation to #3 above, a City of Asheville greenway known as the Glenn's Creek Greenway crosses Merrimon Avenue at the WT Weaver intersection. The current sidewalk width along the east side of Merrimon is inadequate for this greenway.
5. Include pedestrian audible signals and crosswalks at all legs of signalized intersections (especially WT Weaver).
6. Incorporate pedestrian facilities that connect Clearview Terrace with Merrimon Ave consistent with ADA so that it may be easily navigable for pedestrians even though closed to automobiles.
7. Proposal removes right in/right out restriction at CVS (West side between Durwood/Edgewood), which will add more turning conflicts. Why is this being proposed?
8. Normalize the exit of Edgewood Knoll Road by considering bulbing out the north-side to create a more 90-degree approach to Merrimon Avenue, and recommend changes to on-street angle parking, if necessary.
9. Corner radii must comply with city standards and be ADA compliant

### **Streetscape and Property Impacts**

1. There appears to be no provision for street trees or landscaping in the plans, which is a serious deficiency that will degrade the retail corridor. Create an alternative that provides street trees.
2. Utility re-location will be a challenge. According to City standards, utility poles should not be located in the sidewalk and therefore sidewalks need to be wider if shared with utility poles.
3. Properties along Merrimon that developed according to the City of Asheville Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) were required to provide site improvements to access, parking, and street trees. The impacts of the proposal need to address properties that will become non-compliant as a result of any proposal.
4. The CVS property currently has ADA compliant ramp access and steps from Merrimon to the CVS building. Plans should propose how this access will be provided by the plan.
5. Existing pedestrian access from Northside apartments to Merrimon Avenue should be maintained.

### **Policy-Related Comments**

1. AIM Plan & Bicycle Plan compliance. Minimum recommendation is to include an uphill climbing bicycle lane.
2. According to the State Fire Code, fire apparatus access roads shall have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet exclusive of shoulders.