



D U R H A M
Open Space & Trails Commission

Durham City-County Planning Department ▪ 101 City Hall Plaza ▪ Durham, NC 27701

February 4, 2009

To: Mayor William V. Bell and Members of Durham City Council
From: Daniel Clever, Chairman, Durham Open Space and Trails Commission
Subject: Phase E of the American Tobacco Trail South of Massey Chapel Road

The Durham Open Space and Trails Commission (DOST) urges City Council to consider design modifications for a section of Phase E of the American Tobacco Trail (ATT). Currently, the proposed cross-section for Phase E involves a ten-foot wide asphalt surface, with two-foot wide select-surface shoulders on either side. This conforms with the existing cross-section of the trail north of Phase E (i.e. from downtown to NC54). While this cross-section would be useable by pedestrians and bicyclists, it would be prohibitive or difficult for equestrians to use.

Though Phase E of the project runs through the suburban development tier, it also runs through a section of south Durham that has largely been rural until recently. It adjoins the section of the trail currently under construction in Chatham County, which has been designed in accordance with AASHTO standards to accommodate equestrian users with the inclusion of a six-foot wide section of granite screenings along a ten-foot wide section of asphalt paving.

The cross section used for Chatham County would be appropriate to use up to Scott King Road (a distance of approximately 0.6 miles) in that it was a successful compromise reached to best accommodate all types of users (equestrians, pedestrians, and cyclists) and minimize tree loss. It would also be ideal to continue the Chatham cross-section north of Scott King Road up to Massey Chapel Road (a distance of approximately 1.8 miles).

There has been discussion of placing an overflow parking lot for Herndon Park near the intersection of Scott King Road and the ATT that could also accommodate horse trailers. It should also be noted that the additional trail width would be a benefit to all user groups and would accommodate the anticipated volume on this section of the trail.

We request that city staff and the consultant estimate the costs of these modifications and to keep DOST informed of these estimates and their potential impacts on the project and its budget. We have already expressed our dismay with the City Manager that DOST was not given the opportunity to make requests on Phase E before its current cross-section was approved.

After discussions with staff, it is our understanding that any major variation to the approved cross-section may require an amendment to the Municipal Agreement with NCDOT. It is also our understanding that work could continue on unaffected portions of Phase E during this time.

Regardless of the surface type or width of the trail, we also request the City and the Department of Parks and Recreation to allow the use of horses on the American Tobacco Trail south of Massey Chapel Road.

We also request the City to make all efforts to encourage field adjustments that would preserve as many trees as possible and to preserve and re-install as many existing benches and fences as possible. These have been furnished by volunteer effort over the past several years.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or requests about our requests. We strongly feel that these requests will improve the trail not only for equestrian users, but for all future users of Phase E of the ATT.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Clever', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Clever
Chairman, Durham Open Space and Trails Commission

Cc: Thomas J. Bonfield, Durham City Manager
Rhonda B. Parker, Director, Parks & Recreation Department
Ed Venable, Manager of Engineering and Stormwater Services