

Policy Area 4: Transportation Improvements



Key Words and Phrases:

Citizen Comments from Town Meeting (literal, unedited):

DESIRED FUTURE

Transportation, Generally

- Improve the flow of traffic 220, 150, Summerfield Rd, Pleasant Ridge Rd
- Encourage completion of Northern Belt Loop

Transportation, Route 150

- Stoplight at Strawberry & 150
- Traffic/stop light at Strawberry/150

Transportation, Route 220

- Bridge over 220 to 150 & beautify area
- Widen Hwy 220 to Hwy 68

Transportation, Mass Transit

- Mass transit connection to Greensboro
- Bus service to Greensboro

Transportation, Pleasant Ridge Rd

- Stop light – Pleasant Ridge & SFD Rd
- Traffic circle SFD Rd & Pleasant Ridge

You can have nice streets, and you can put trees back on them, and you can make beautiful buildings with front porches again, but if the only place it leads is out to the [major road], then we are going to have the same (disconnected, unlivable) environment all over again.

Peter Calthorpe
Time Magazine
May 20, 1991

UNWANTED FUTURE

Traffic Congestion and Inadequate Roads

- Unmanaged traffic 150, Pleasant Ridge, 220, SFD Rd
- Roadways not being upgraded
- Traffic that does not move on highways
- Over crowded roads

Traffic Lights Poorly Designed or Unwanted

- No traffic lights without turn lanes

Adverse Impacts of Major Roads Like I-73

- No noisy I-73 that divides the town. Should be below grade. Don't repeat the Southern Loop
- No commercial development at interstate intersections
- No noise from expanding 220 & I-73
- Unnecessarily noisy, over traveled connector for I-73
- Bypass road through town
- Roads should not split town

Parking on Greenlawn is unwanted & dangerous

Town Council/Zoning Board Comments From Joint Kick Off Meeting:

Address Interstate 73 Impacts on the Town

- Identify and manage the effects of I-73
- I-73 division of town
- Fear of the unknown of I-73 – will it cut the town in half or not?

Address Traffic and Transportation Issues

- Expansion, updating, and realignment of existing major roadways
- Try to connect neighborhoods – EMS and neighbors
- Traffic leaving/getting into Summerfield at 7-8 am and 5-6 pm

The above *key words and phrases* were gleaned from (1) the Town Meeting for the Comprehensive Plan (2) the Joint Kick-Off Meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Board. These key words and phrases were employed to generate the following **Common Objective** and related **Policies for Transportation Improvements**



Common Objective for Transportation Improvements

The Town of Summerfield shall work proactively with the State DOT toward an efficient system of transportation, including thoroughfares, local roads, sidewalks, and trails. Advanced planning and follow-through shall be employed to create a functional system of streets and highways. New developments shall exhibit an inter-connected network of streets, sidewalks, trails, and bike paths to foster the continued evolution of Summerfield toward a more walkable and bikeable community. The Town will cooperate with efforts to provide public transit service between Summerfield and other areas.

Policies for Transportation Improvements

Policy 4.1: INTERSTATE 73 should be designed to minimize negative impacts on the town. Noise abatement and effective screening should be used where necessary to buffer properties adjoining the interstate. Underpasses and overpasses should be employed to maintain pedestrian and bicycle linkages between areas on opposite sides of the highway. Special highway corridor development standards, including a community-wide ban on billboards, should be established to maintain a high quality image for Summerfield. (Also see Policy Area 8 Community Appearance Policies.)

Policy 4.2: PEDESTRIAN AND BIKEWAY FACILITIES shall be encouraged as energy-efficient, healthful, and environmentally sound alternatives to the automobile. All future road construction and expansion within the town shall consider opportunities for bikeways and pedestrian ways within the project.

Policy 4.3: ACCESS TO MAJOR ROADS should generally be from intersecting minor roads, rather than private driveways. Minimum lot frontages, service roads, central medians, and other methods may also be employed to facilitate traffic movement and protect taxpayer dollars invested to build the facility.

Policy 4.4: So as to minimize unnecessary and unsafe turning movements on to and off of major roads, the Town shall require CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARKING LOTS OF ADJOINING COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS.

Policy 4.5: So as to (1) minimize the use of major roadways for purely local trips, (2) allow for public safety access, and (3) facilitate the development of Summerfield as a walkable and bikeable community, the Town shall encourage STREET CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ADJOINING RESIDENTIAL AREAS, provided that the street layout discourages cut through traffic through established residential neighborhoods.

Policy 4.6: As new neighborhoods are developed, AT LEAST TWO POINTS OF ACCESS/EGRESS to through streets should be planned for or provided for larger developments. The secondary access/egress may be gated with a breakaway wall for emergency services, but should allow for passage of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Policy 4.7: ACCESS TO HIGHER INTENSITY DEVELOPMENT shall generally not be permitted through an area of lower intensity development. For example, access to a multi-family development, major park facility or large traffic generator shall not be permitted through a single-family residential neighborhood.

Policy 4.8: To help avoid heavy traffic loads on local streets, MAJOR TRAFFIC GENERATORS such as major shopping centers, large retailers, major institutional centers, and other large non-residential developments should be located only at or near the intersection of two or more major roadways where extensive acreage is available. For Summerfield, this means the intersection of I-73 AND HIGHWAY 220.

Motorcar manufacturers look forward confidently to the time when every family will have two, if not three, cars.

Lewis Mumford
April 1958

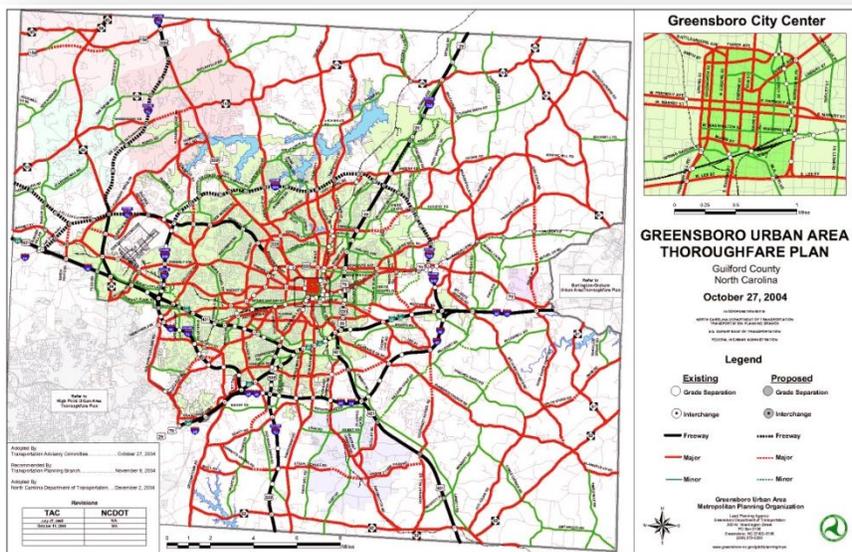
Policy 4.9: New developments shall be required to MITIGATE THEIR TRAFFIC IMPACTS so as to preserve the traffic carrying capacity of public roadways.

Policy 4.10: PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS should be provided through commercial parking areas and from the public street right of way to the building(s).

Notes and Commentary:

New Interstate 73 Through Summerfield

The planned construction of I-73 through Summerfield has many area residents concerned about the new interstate's impact on the community. Concerns voiced by citizens at both the *leadership kick-off meeting* and the *first special town meeting* were much the same:



- Will this new limited access highway divide the town—both physically and socially?
 - Will the volume of traffic on the highway create noise and visual impacts for the properties near the planned corridor?
 - Will the highway corridor generate undesirable forms of commercial development at each interchange along its path?
 - What can be done to minimize these impacts?

Experience with communities facing similar major highway development suggests that the Town should stay in close communication with transportation officials throughout the planning and construction period. While actual construction of I-73 through Summerfield is not likely to occur until sometime after 2013, some planning and right of way acquisition activities are already underway. At the time of this writing, joint federal and state permitting activities have also begun, particularly with regard to the environmental impacts of stream crossings.

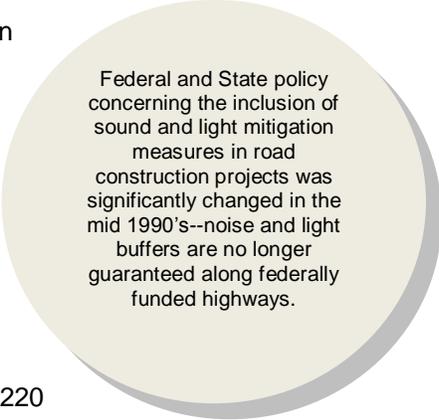
Another significant issue for the Town to monitor will be planned points of passage under or over the roadway-- for automobiles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and horses. In reviewing the preliminary route proposed for the interstate, opportunities for such crossings could exist at up to six different locations in Summerfield. Four would be in conjunction with a road crossing, one at a stream crossing and one in association with an abandoned railroad bed. All should be given due consideration for without these important connections,

Summerfield is more apt to become two communities separated by the interstate.

Finally, the Town needs to take the lead in establishing special highway corridor development standards to address land use, signage, landscaping and buffering, parking, and other issues typical of major transportation corridors. Standards for constructing such improvements within the highway corridor are best if adopted *before* the road is completed.

Federal and State Policy Concerning Noise Abatement Walls and Other Similar Features

Whenever a major new highway is built in or near an existing developed area, roadway noise and light issues can become important. Sound and light abatement measures are often necessary to protect the livability of properties adjoining the highway. Of note, Federal and State policy concerning the inclusion of such mitigation measures in road construction projects was significantly changed in the mid 1990's--noise and light buffers are no longer guaranteed along federally funded highways. Specifically, homes whose construction permits were issued after the "public knowledge date" announcing plans for the highway are no longer guaranteed protection from noise, light, and other impacts. Under this policy, it is especially incumbent upon real estate professionals to make this policy known to buyers of properties near planned highway corridors. In light of this policy, highway planners suggest that homeowners with property in "vulnerable" locations take action well in advance of highway construction to plant evergreen trees and other types of screening.



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US Route 220 Widening, Roadway Character, and Trail Crossing

US Route 220 is currently a divided highway north of the NC 68 / US 220 interchange in Rockingham County. Plans to widen US 220 through Summerfield have been in the works for many years. The first section scheduled for widening will be from the NC 68 intersection south to the planned interchange of 220 with the new section of I-73 in Summerfield. (I-73 and US 220 will run together from this point north.) This will bring the US 220 four-lane south to a point across the Haw River in Summerfield. The US 220 corridor north of the Haw River will have sufficient right of way to accommodate service roads.

Upon completion of the upgrade, US 220 through Summerfield will be a four lane divided highway with partial controlled access and a depressed median with guard rails if needed. U-turns will be allowed. Right of way acquisition for the road widening is underway and will bring the highway closer to existing homes along its path. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2010 and take up to 3 years, provided that the current fiscal crisis does not prompt a postponement. Significantly, plans for the widening of US 220 call for a trail crossing under the roadway near the present intersection of Old Summerfield Road. Preliminary plans call for a box culvert about 16 feet wide and 8 to 10 feet tall. (The height of the box will have a significant impact on the ability of riders on horseback to pass through without dismounting.) This crossing would be a critical central feature of any trail system in the town. An NC DOT-town agreement calls for Summerfield to pay for 10 to 20% of the construction cost, and to maintain the crossing facility after completion.

Possible Extension and Realignment of NC 150

Currently, commuters traveling through Summerfield from southwest to northeast frequently take Hamburg Mill Road east to its intersection with US 220, then turn north on 220 for a short distance to Strawberry Road. Once US 220 is widened and improved, commuters will no longer be able to make the left hand turn from Hamburg Mill Road onto 220 north, thereby taking away this popular route.

One alternative under consideration is to extend NC 150 due west from its present intersection with US 220 at Auburn Road and the Food Lion shopping center. The proposed NC 150 extension would take in Auburn Road and then cut a new path west to Brookbank Road just east of the planned intersection of Brookbank and Interstate 73. Along the way, the 150 extension would intersect with Pleasant Ridge Road, thereby reestablishing a desirable southwest to northeast route through Summerfield. Of note, while the NC 150 extension is identified in the 30 year (2035) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), it is not included in the 7 year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Thus, it is not a current priority.

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Possible Transfer of Local Road Maintenance from NC DOT to Local Governments

No discussion of current transportation issues would be complete without mentioning on-going discussions at the state level about turning responsibility for local roads over to local governments who do not currently have such responsibility (e.g. the Town of Summerfield).

Generally, under the proposal, larger roads would continue to be maintained by the State, while all local roads (except private) would be turned over to towns and counties. More specifically, the State classifies all roads as (1) Statewide (between major regions), (2) Regional (between localities or smaller regions) and (3) Sub-Regional (within localities or regions). Under the new arrangement, county governments would take over responsibility for Sub-Regional Roads in unincorporated areas, and municipalities would be responsible for in-town streets. Currently, most larger cities employ Powell Bill monies, funded by the State gas tax, to maintain city streets. Streets in many smaller towns, such as Summerfield, are maintained by the State DOT. If implemented, the proposed change in street construction and maintenance responsibilities could have many more small towns dipping into the same pot of Powell Bill monies that are now being used by a smaller number of municipalities. This would have enormous political, administrative, and financial implications. It will be further discussed under Policy Area 12: *“Summerfield as a Limited Services Local Government”*.

Public Transit

While Summerfield currently has no public transit services within the community or available to commuters, examples of such services exist within the region. Twice daily bus service is available between Mount Airy and Winston-Salem, a distance of some 37 miles. Park and ride lots are located in Pilot Mountain. Pleasant Garden and Forest Oakes may soon have a transit service. Transit officials are also considering a service from Rockingham County to Greensboro; for that service, a logical “catchment area” would place one or more park and ride lots in Summerfield. (The construction of parking areas serving the new town ballfields on the north side of town may present an opportunity for same. Another possibility would be the soon to be built parking area at the A and Y Greenway trailhead.)