

Historic Glenwood Brooklyn Neighborhood Association Position Statement on Proposed Southeast High Speed Rail Section V – Option NC 3 August 25, 2010

The Historic Glenwood Brooklyn Neighborhood Association (HGBNA) took a vote in reference to the proposed Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) Section V-Option NC 3. Two questions were asked during the vote.

- 1) Do you, in general, support High Speed Rail being constructed in the Raleigh/Triangle area?
- 2) Do you support/not support the NC 3 option being proposed for High Speed Rail?

By a vote of 72 to 16 the residents of the Historic Glenwood Brooklyn Neighborhood (HGBN) support High Speed Rail for the Raleigh/Triangle area.

By a vote of 76 to 10 the residents of HGBN DO NOT support the NC 3 option.

To articulate our non-support of the NC 3 option, HGBNA developed a Position Statement listing the concerns of the NC 3 option.

Position Statement

It is imperative, that we stress the importance that we, as a neighborhood, place on High Speed Rail (HSR) and this project. A project of this significance needs to be properly planned and executed to be successful. We also stress that this is not a “not in my back yard” statement but a documentation of the issues with what we feel is the worst of 3 poor options under consideration (NC1/2 and 3). All of the three options are severely limited by the requirement that existing rail corridors be used. This approach may be the best way to move forward on the project in a majority of rural areas but clearly does not work in the downtown Raleigh area. Many better suited options are available and should be explored, especially with the recently proposed Capital Blvd Corridor Study. We would welcome the opportunity to review these new options with CoR and NCDOT staff as time permits. In any event, given the current proposals of NC1, NC2 and NC3 below are our list of concerns.

- 1) At this point there are too many unknowns and unanswered questions to make a decision that will impact the City of Raleigh (CoR) and the region for 100+ years. City staff, the Passenger Rail Task Force (PRTF) and NCDOT have been asked many questions but did not give responses to

some of the most critical issues. Despite these unanswered questions, the PRTF and City staff have hastily determined that they will support NC 3 without understanding fully, the substantial negative impacts this proposed route will have on neighborhoods such as HGBN, the future development of the Capital Blvd corridor, and the citizens of Raleigh in general. We find this unacceptable.

Below is a partial list of the unanswered questions:

- Define specific noise impacts to the adjacent neighborhoods
- Define specific vibration impacts
- Define specific pollution impacts such as additional exhaust, additional diesel particulates, dust, etc.
- What are the projected passenger/freight train volumes in 20 years, 30 years, etc?
- When and why did the CoR request NC 3 to be included in the options?
- Why were affected neighborhoods not consulted and thus had no input prior to the CoR proposing alternative NC 3?
- What are the plans for expanding the HSR in the future?

- 2) Residents of HGBN are extremely frustrated by the process for review of such a significant project. The time allowed for review and understanding the scope and impact of HSR has been limited. It may meet the minimum review times required for federally funded projects, but limiting proper and comprehensive review to a few weeks is short sighted at best and at worst destructive to good and thoughtful planning. This, in conjunction, with the fact that major questions cannot be answered and that there have been discrepancies in the information provided to date, leads to distrust in the system and extreme frustration. It seems that in an effort to chase Federal dollars, the importance of creating the best long term plan for Raleigh and the potential lasting effects of a poor decision has been lost.
- 3) PRTF and CoR has indicated the “diamond” near Wake Forest Road (where the CSX and Norfolk Southern Tracks cross) is a barrier for the NC 1/2 options. NCDOT originally proposed the NC 1/2 options and only included NC 3 at the CoR’s recommendation. This indicates, that NCDOT already considered this rail crossing to have minimal effect on the NC 1/2 options in terms of functionality and safety. Additionally, Norfolk Southern, who would be most affected by this crossing, as their freight traffic would yield to HSR traffic, have indicated the rail crossing to be a non-issue. In any event, modern switching, control and track sensor technologies make safe diamond crossings attainable.
- 4) There should be a Comprehensive Transportation Plan produced by the NCDOT, City of Raleigh, etc. to include: HSR, Light Rail, Bus Service, AMTRAK, air travel, etc. which provides guidance in these types of

decisions. No one has been able to provide this type of overview for this project. The discussion has focused on HSR in a vacuum without considering the other equally important transportation projects and needs. It would be a significant planning mistake not to take a more wholistic planning view. We stress that this comprehensive plan should include the entire "Triangle" area (as we are called) including not just Raleigh but Durham, Chapel Hill, Cary, Apex, Wake Forest, etc.

- 5) The PRTF and CoR staff have indicated that Harrington Street and West Street would have to be closed under the NC 1/2 options. Federal Rail Administration (FRA) Guidelines indicate rail at this speed DOES NOT require street closures or grade separation at rail crossings, only a "sealed corridor" is required. Grade Separations may be preferred but not required. Other methods are available to provide a sealed corridor.

If grade separations are indeed preferred, then the CoR should conduct a complete Engineering investigation, made available to the public, into tunneling West and/or Harrington Streets under the proposed HSR. A broad stroke answer to this point "the costs are too high" does not satisfy the need for a complete engineering analysis. Another issue cited by City authorities is the water table may be too high in Raleigh for tunneling. However, many other cities, including the City of Boston, have tunneled transportation projects in recent years and have water table issues that are equal if not worse than the City of Raleigh's. Additionally there could be potential solutions utilizing a viaduct to bring NC1/2 into the Norfolk Southern line between Peace Street and Lane Street with West and/or Harrington Streets going under the rail.

- 6) PRTF and City Staff have repeatedly mentioned the Union Depot station as a reason to support the NC 3 option. Their reasoning is NC 3 supports a center platform and NC 1/2 supports outside platforms separated from the main train station. Outside platforms are used throughout the world and work effectively. If a center platform is desired, the architectural and engineering minds available for this type of project could solve this issue.
- 7) No projection of passenger/freight traffic 25, 50+ years in the future has been given. A current projection of only 8 additional passenger trains a day is being used. There would also be an additional 4 to 8 freight trains. With the expected population growth along the east coast and Raleigh, passenger and freight train numbers need to be projected to truly understand the impacts on Raleigh. The projected HSR ridership should be compared with the existing and projected ridership of Amtrak. This should also include the time of travel differences of the existing and future Amtrak connections and HSR connections.

- 8) Potential negative impacts to property values and a complete lack of a mitigation plan and no projected costs for mitigation have been provided. Case studies from other cities and regions of the country should be analyzed to review and define these impacts.
- 9) Possible eminent domain declared for (501 Washington Street, 504 Washington Street, 501 Devereux Street, closing the alley next to 501 Cleveland Street, parking lot for the office building at Pierce and Dale Streets). Parking for the office building will be forced to use adjacent streets for parking. Note that most homes in this area must use this same street parking as few driveways exist in the neighborhood.
- 10) Possible reclamation of right of way currently used as a soft landscaped buffer between the existing NS tracks and HGBN.
- 11) Projected rail traffic speeds of 60 mph for passenger trains (with conflicting statements ranging up to a 79 mph track rating) and 45 mph for freight trains are too fast this close to residential areas.
- 12) The possible Controlled Access corridor barrier recently discussed as a chain link fence (20' – 30' high) at the edge of the right of way is a solution that will not beautify the City or the HGBN. Such a solution for controlled access will further divide the city and only deteriorate the neighborhoods. Again, other options should be considered.

HGBNA would be glad to participate and be involved in the follow up studies and work involved in reconsidering and reshaping the HSR initiative.

Respectfully submitted,

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